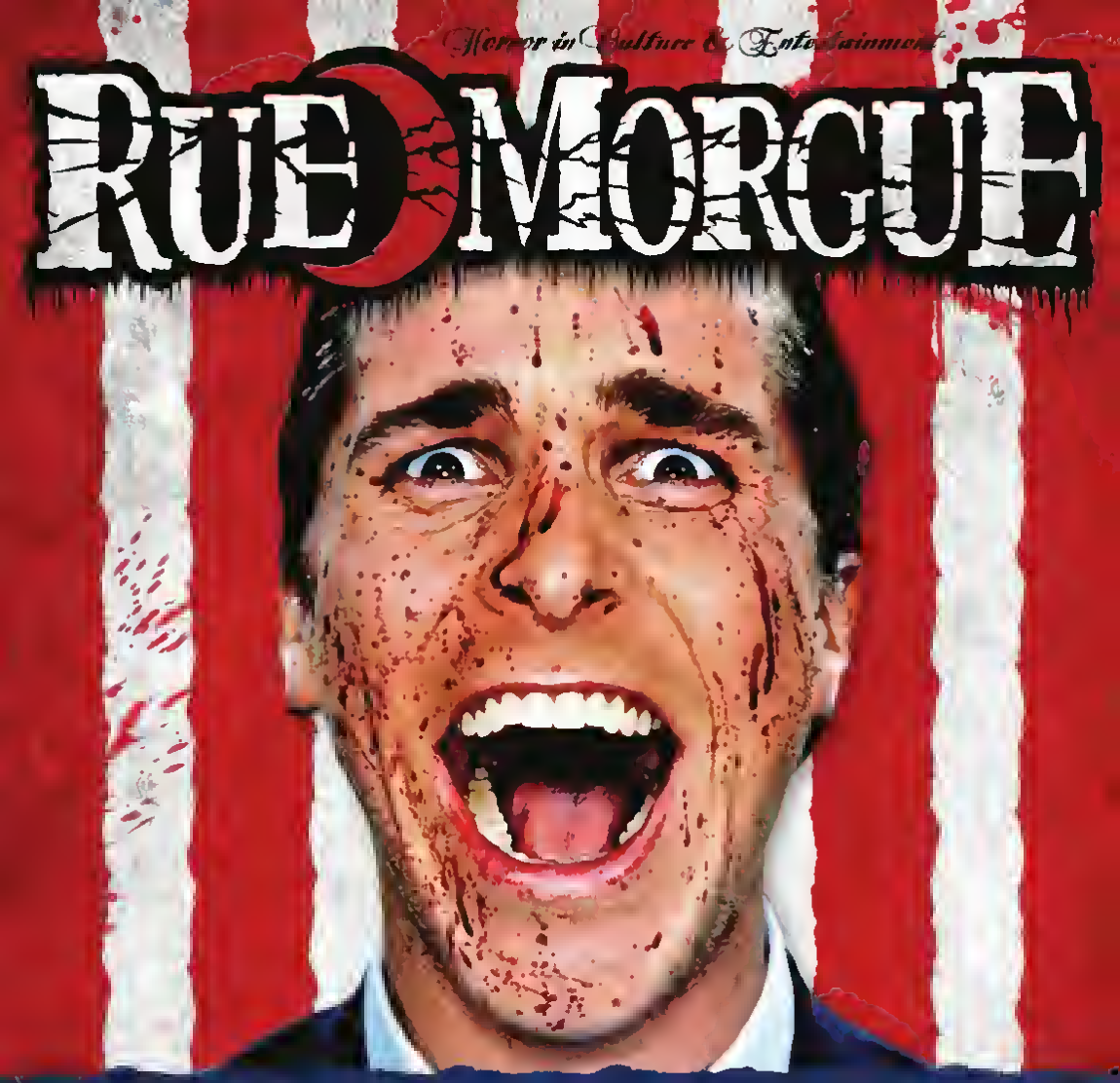
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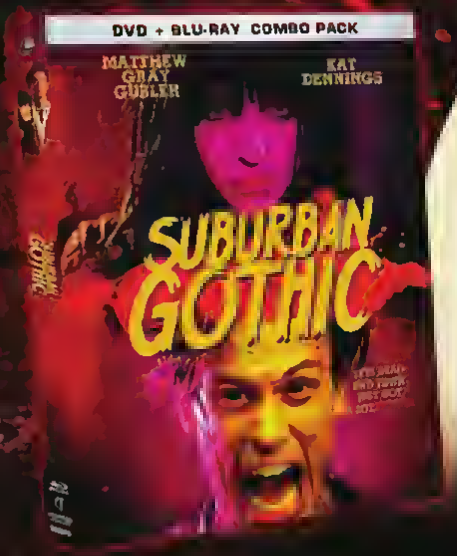
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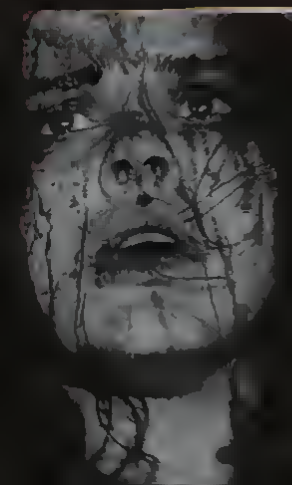
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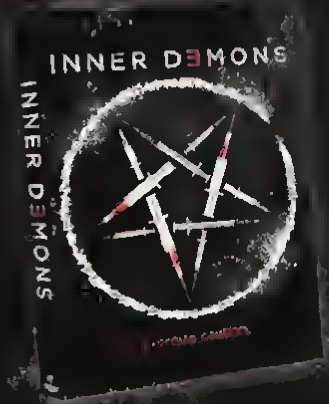




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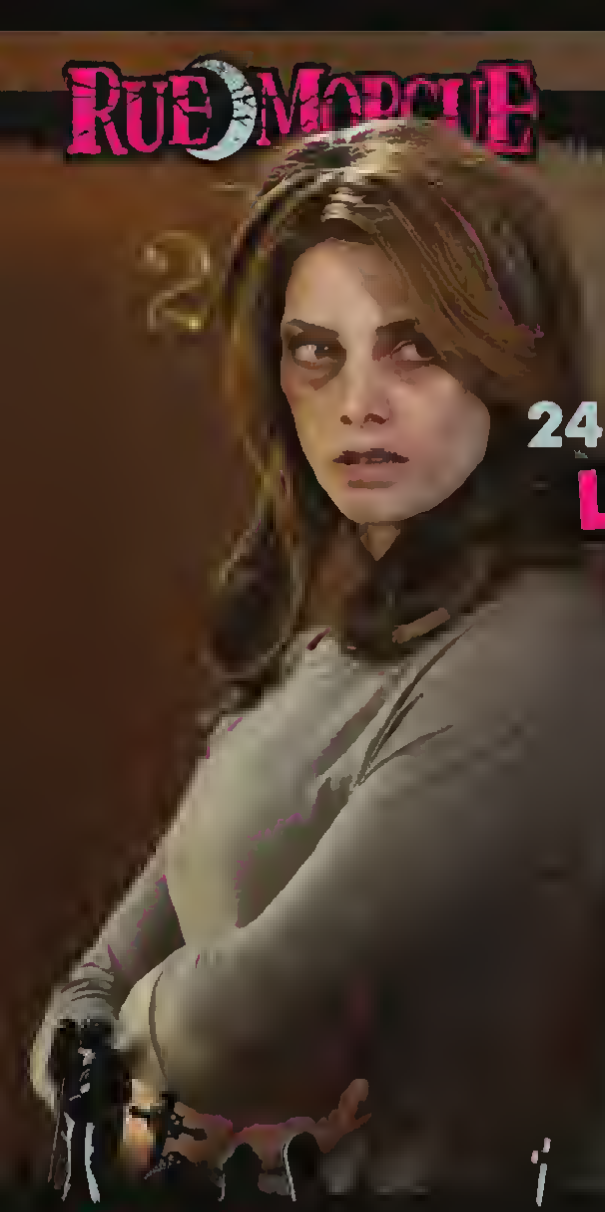


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RUE MORGUE

JULY 2015 #157



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NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND



What a difference a hyphen can make. A nightmare is, as you know, a bad dream; the experiences we all have while sleeping that fuel feelings of fear, anxiety, sadness or other negative emotions. A night-mare, however, is much more specific; powerful and horrifying, as it's another name for sleep paralysis, a unique state between consciousness and unconsciousness in which you can't move or speak but your eyes are open and you experience very vivid hallucinations of a malevolent force in the room with you that exerts pressure on your chest, causing you to gasp for breath.

Sleep paralysis affects a minority of the population, but it's a global phenomenon that is probably as old as humanity, as evidenced by the fact that it's been referenced in books, art and folklore for thousands of years – the most famous example being the 1781 Henry Fuseli painting The Nightmare. This month's issue goes into more detail about it with my feature on Rodney Ascher's documentary *The Nightmare* which focuses on the experience of people who suffer from recurrent isolated sleep paralysis (RISP), meaning they endure this terrifying experience on a regular basis.

I wrote about my own experiences with night-mares back in *RM#110*, noting that they had happened to me three times, and that nothing else I've experienced comes close to causing that much terror. It happened again last year, and again the experience was way more intense than a simple nightmare. It's difficult to fully explain a night-mare to someone who's never had sleep paralysis because it's not only a very specific tortured physical state, it also incorporates the emotional hell of believing that you are about to die and can't do a damn thing about it.

In the aforementioned feature I cite Shelly Adler's *Sleep Paralysis: Night-mare, Nocebos, and the Mind-Body Connection*, which offers an in-depth look at the affliction. (She's the one who delineates "night-mare" from "nightmare" by adding the hyphen.) Its icy tendrils have wound their way through history, culture and religion, popping up in everything from ancient Assyrian, Sumerian and Greek mythology, to the Bible and the Salem Witch Trials. Sleep paralysis has been depicted in scores of paintings, drawings and woodcuts throughout history; it helped inform famous horror stories such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* and Guy de Maupassant's *Le Horla*; and it was instrumental in forming the script for *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Even the "mare" in "nightmare" is derived from the Anglo Saxon "mare," which refers to a nocturnal "crusher."

Yet, as Adler emphasizes, despite its prevalence, it's only recently that we (in North America) have really started talking about sleep paralysis. I'd always assumed my experiences were just some sort of unusual nightmares until I first read mention of them in a news article as a shared phenomenon. A psychologist named J. Allan Cheyne has done extensive research on the condition and suggests, in a 2005 article published at *Science News Online*, that it's caused by two separate brain structures: "inner-brain structures that monitor one's surroundings for threats and launches responses to perceived dangers" and a "second brain system, which includes sensory and motor parts of the brain's outer layer, distinguishes one's own body and self from those of other creatures." Essentially, it's R.E.M. (dream time) sleep interfering with being awake, in a specific way. Yet, ultimately, the shared experience of a definite, stifling "evil" force in one's bedroom remains unexplained.

So, the boogeyman is alive and well in some of our heads; we don't know why, we can't get rid of it, and – in the famous case of the Hmong refugees in America who died of sudden unexpected nocturnal death syndrome (SUNDS) in the 1970s (this was specifically the inspiration for *A Nightmare on Elm Street* I noted) – it can literally kill. If there's a more terrifying concept, I can't think of it.

We fear what we don't understand, and in the most secular time in human history we also fear *not understanding* itself. Something like sleep paralysis contains inexplicable elements of the paranormal and the supernatural, and that doesn't sit very well. At the same time, those of us who seek the fantastic are drawn to anything that offers up the mystery of the unexplained. However, unlike a horror movie or a nightmare, a night-mare strips the sufferer of any control or distance (even the scariest movie or worst nightmare won't asphyxiate you). There's no pleasant adrenaline rush to be had during or after an episode, either. And while there are preventative measures that can be taken, such as not sleeping on your back, this is an ancient curse, of sorts, that we can't break.

There are many things we humans have solved and mastered, but our subconscious remains wild and sometimes downright hostile. When it comes to night-mares, a hyphen scares the hell out of me.

Dave Alexander

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Horror in Culture & Entertainment

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RUE MORGUE #157 would not have been possible without the valuable assistance of: Mary-Beth Hollyer, Al McMullen, Annie Hennessey and Lloyd the Bartender.

COVER: AMERICAN PSYCHO

Design by Andrew Wright

Rue Morgue Magazine is published monthly (with the exception of February). Rue Morgue accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photos, art or other materials. Freelance submissions accompanied by S.A.S.E. will be seriously considered and, if necessary, returned.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

RUE MORGUE Magazine #157 ISSN 1481-1103

Agreement No. 40033784

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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM

JUST FINISHED and sent off my final Necronomicomics, which will run in July's issue. Thanks to *Rue Morgue* magazine for all their support these past four years, and to Ron McKenzie for his continued support of my work during his time as office manager of the magazine.

JAY FOSGITT, VIA FACEBOOK

[*And thank you for the fantastic Necronomicomics, Jay. See more of Jay's work at jayfosgitt.com* – Ed.]

ALWAYS THE START of a good day when I find a new *RM* in my mail! Cool cover [for #155], guys!

@BOOBTYRRELL, VIA TWITTER

THE *RUE MORGUE* with a red-eyed Mads Mikkelsen as Hannibal on the cover [#155] has the best review of David Robert Mitchell's *It Follows* that I've read. Dave Alexander neither praises nor bashes the film excessively, which I like. The critic mentions the lead character swimming out to a motorboat full of guys and nothing ever coming of it. Yes, it's one plot hole amongst many. He never mentions how frustratingly bad the swimming pool climax is, though. I have to disagree with his complaints about the use of the "clamshell" e-reader, which looked more like a compact than a mollusk. That compact/clamshell actually endeared e-readers to me.

ADAM NESMITH, VIA FACEBOOK

DIDN'T THINK IT possible, but with the @BryanFuller interview in @Rue-Morgue, I love @NBCHannibal even more. Better to dine in hell....

@SETHANIKEEM, VIA TWITTER

SOCIETY [*RM#155*] is FINALLY getting the recognition it deserves – such a beautiful thing. [tear rolls down face]

@HIDDENMOVIES, VIA TWITTER

ALOHA, MR. BOWEN. I was tickled when I saw your first review of *Luther the Geek* in *RM#103*. I thought it was awesome that you decided to spread the word again in *RM#153*. Just thought I would let you know that in my wife and I you found two people who adore that geek. It is so beloved by us that when we take a chance on another low-budget, independent flick searching for that rough gem we call it "looking for a *Luther*." And though far from collectors, Stacy felt it might someday become scarce and bought our own copy to ensure future viewings. Looking forward to your continued efforts to shine a light on the little known but worthy tales that someone was compelled to put to film.

ERNEST BOWMAN – ADDRESS WITHHELD

JOHNNY DEPP NEEDS to watch *The Changeling* [*RM#154*] again. He may have watched it 35 years ago when he said it was "the greatest ghost story of all time," but I watched it recently on Netflix and it does not hold a candle to a classic like *The Shining* or a film that borrows from it but executes better, like *Insidious*. Also, when are you guys going to add a rating system to your movie reviews, like you have for video games and music? Some reviews waver from positive to negative with no clear recommendation.

KEVIN – FLORIDA

SHAME ON EVERYONE who dares mention women in horror fiction and fails to cover the master, Charlee Jacob. Jacob fell into obscurity after illness left her disabled. Jacob is one of the greatest modern horror writers. Her work is as poetic and atmospheric as Ligotti and more gory and gruesome than Ryan Harding and T. Winter Damon. It's a great tragedy that her work is so criminally underrated.

KYLE NONNEMAN – ONTARIO, OREGON



HERE'S MY LATEST tattoo paying homage to two of my favourite things: *An American Werewolf in London* and this *Rue Morgue* magazine cover. Done by Jon Keller at Angelheart Tattoos in Anniston, Alabama, this piece is the first installment of what will eventually become my horror sleeve.

BRANDON DEESE, VIA FACEBOOK

AS I LIVE in Australia, I get this mag via HorrorBlock. I love this mag. It is well set out, informative and slightly off centre. Thank you for a fantastic mag.

NATALIE SIMPKIN, VIA FACEBOOK

EXPIRING MINDS...

ON RUE MORGUE'S FACEBOOK PAGE



What is the most terrifying thing you've seen in a nightmare?

A giant flying spider with a woman's head, biting the heads off of my family members.

CHRISTOPHER LYNARDAKIS

Looking into the mirror, I saw the back of my own head instead of the front.

AMBER MENTA

A demon lying on top of me. He asked, "Are you scared of me?" I said, "No." He then showed me a photo of my mom in a coffin.

ROBERT GRIGSBY

Starfish-headed man in a red robe. It was a recurring nightmare as a child.

SARAH-SARAH HOBERTSON

I watched a man stand in front of his bathroom mirror, take a straight razor and slice his own corneas off.

LISA BLACK

A mad woman with no mouth, staring at me.

IAN JORDAN

A bunch of evil Smurfs that kept people's laughter in mason jars inside a cave.

DANIELA PERSEFONE SANSORES

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POST MORTEM

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Dreadlines

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

NINETEENTH ANNUAL FANTASIA FILM FESTIVAL EXPOSES NEW GLOBAL HORROR FILMS

Montreal is once again preparing itself for the genre cinema onslaught known as the Fantasia International Film Festival. The nineteenth edition of the annual fest runs from July 14 through August 4, and will host 22 continuous days of film screenings, Q&As, spotlights and other special events.

Originally conceived in 1996 as a celebration of Asian genre cinema, Fantasia has since expanded its scope to include horror, action, sci-fi and fantasy films from around the world. Last year's festival attracted 129,000 fans and screened 461 movies from 32 countries, making it one of the world's largest and most influential genre film fests.

Fantasia 2015 will offer some mainstream programming, including the Montreal premiere of Marvel's *Ant-Man*. The meat of the festival, though, is genre fare aimed at moviegoers with more offbeat tastes. The films are bonkers, the screenings are packed and the energy is high; at Fantasia, it's midnight around the clock.

"It's a very special atmosphere of excitement, enthusiasm, curiosity and love," says festival co-director Mitch Davis. "We do everything we can to [avoid putting up] barriers between filmmaker and audience, and we pride ourselves on making sure the so-called smaller indie films get recognized and supported here. We prioritize finding ways to ensure that unconventional films find their audience, which is the main reason we run for three weeks, instead of playing on a dozen screens across a week or ten days, as most fests do, where it's often a cultural collision course and the blockbuster or super-anticipated films eat the unknown indies alive."



A number of buzzed-about horror films from across the globe will make their world premieres at Fantasia this year, including underground legend Larry Kent's *She Who Must Burn*; producer-turned-director Sonny Mallhi's *Anguish*; the Israeli shocker *JeruZalem*; the anthology films *Tales of Halloween* and *A Christmas Horror Story*; and *Kidnapped* director Miguel Ángel Vivas' English-language debut, *Extinction*.





"This year's lineup is the farthest reaching, geographically speaking, that we've ever had," notes Davis, who also serves as the festival's co-director of international programming. "We'll be doing spotlights on new genre cinema from Ireland and Spain, and we've got films from Ethiopia, Uganda, Nigeria and Pakistan."

The list of Fantasia 2015's Canadian premieres will include SXSW standout *Nina Forever*; Adrian Garcia Bogliano's gory black comedy *Scherzo Diabolico*; the Kiwi heavy-metal bloodbath *Deathgasm*; Karyn Kusama's slow-burn thriller *The Invitation*; the Irish creature feature *The Hallow*; and the supernatural slasher flick *Some Kind of Hate*. The Henry Rollins-led *He Never Died* will make its international debut, while the anthology film *German Angst*, featuring Jörg Buttgereit's long-awaited return to narrative filmmaking, will make its bow to North American audiences.



While new films comprise the bulk of Fantasia's programming, Davis cites a repertory screening and a live radio play production as two of this year's most anticipated events.

"We've got a special, world-premiere unveiling of the new restoration of Philip Ridley's 1990 masterpiece *The Reflecting Skin*," Davis says. "It's one of the most extraordinary genre films ever to be birthed from the Canadian cinema landscape. This is a nightmarish and poetic masterpiece, possibly the most deathly coming-of-age film I've ever seen. ... Now that a new HD master exists – this is a visually stunning film – I'm confident it's going to find the adoration it's been waiting decades for. We've also got Glass Eye Pix's Larry Fessenden coming in to mount a special *Tales from Beyond the Pale* evening, featuring segments by him, Glenn McQuaid [*I Sell the Dead*] and Douglas Buck [*Cutting Moments*]. This will be the first time a *Tales from Beyond the Pale* show will have been performed in Canada, and we're very, very excited about it."

For more information, visit fantasiafestival.com.

APRIL SNELLINGS

TOUR OFFERS HALLOWEEN SLEEPOVER IN CASTLE FRANKENSTEIN

A stay in the ruins of a place associated with a tale of a reanimated corpse isn't the kind of thing that you'll likely find listed on Expedia, but for adventurous horror fans, the chance to spend Halloween night in the remnants of Frankenstein's Castle is a dream – that can come true. Connecticut-based Tours of Terror, organizers of the long-running Dracula Tour excursions to Transylvania, has announced that the 2016 edition of its annual Halloween tour will include a stopover at the place that, according to popular lore, helped inspire Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*.

The castle visit will be part of a week-long tour scheduled for October 25 through November 1, 2016. Travelling by coach, the group will divide its time between Germany and the Czech Republic, where it'll visit such appropriately strange sites as the Alchemy Museum, the Museum of Torture Instruments and the infamous Houska Castle, which, legend has it, sits over a portal to Hell. The tour will also include historic execution sites, graveyards and even the stomping grounds of the Golem of Prague.

"We've been producing the Dracula Tour since 1998, and always try to come up with new theme tours for not only our repeat travellers, but also for other horror aficionados who want to travel to haunted destinations," says Charles F. Rosenay (a.k.a. Cryptmaster Chiller Chucky), who will serve as tour guide for the outing. "We always wanted to do something that included Castle Frankenstein, but going to the village of Darmstadt – home to the castle – wasn't enough."

The castle, located in Germany's Odenwald mountain range, has been associated with a number of legends over the centuries, including the story of Lord Georg and the Dragon and various sorcery-infused Walpurgis Night tales. The castle's association with Shelley's Frankenstein mythos comes via Johann Conrad Dippel, a 17th-century alchemist who was born on the estate and might have been an inspiration for the novel's infamous scientist. (Local legend maintains that Dippel conducted experiments on exhumed corpses in the castle, possibly even zapping them with lightning.) The connection is considered dubious by most academics, but was championed by hugely influential scholar Radu Florescu, author of *In Search of Dracula* (1972) and *In Search of Frankenstein* (1975).



The castle fell into disrepair in the 18th century and only ruins are left today. Still, the site has become a prime destination for Halloween revellers – a status that made it easier for the tour's organizers to gain overnight access.

"It's not nearly as complicated as when we spend Halloween night in Dracula's Castle in Transylvania," Rosenay notes. "We are the exclusive group who party there, and reserve space from year to year. At Frankenstein Castle, there is already a huge Halloween bash – probably one of the biggest in Eastern Europe – so we become part of the celebration and festivities."

Rosenay says the Castle Frankenstein portion of the excursion will begin with a bus trek through the Germanic countryside, where the group will watch 1931's *Frankenstein* to set the mood. Travellers will tour the castle grounds – in full Halloween getup, of course – before settling in for dinner, drinks and a masquerade bash. Rosenay describes as "part Halloween haunt, part rave and part Hollywood production with other costumed characters, jumbo screens, dancing and revelry."

Rosenay says the tour is appropriate for solo travellers, couples and even families. The cost is $2599 USD per person. Since it is limited to 52 travellers – one coachload – Rosenay expects the trip to sell out long before the July 1, 2016 reservation deadline. Check out ghostours.com for more details, including contact information.



(From top) Rendering of original Castle Frankenstein, and how the ruined castle looks now

APRIL SNELLINGS



THE AMAZING KRESKIN LAUNCHES PARANORMAL-THEMED DATING SITE

After six decades of ferreting out the secrets of the human mind, renowned mentalist The Amazing Kreskin has turned his attention to the darkest mystery of all: Internet dating. March saw the launch of The Amazing Kreskin's Supernatural Dating Society (SDS), a website aimed at helping people connect with fellow paranormal enthusiasts.

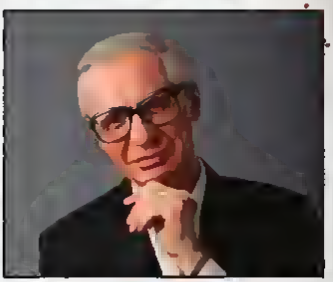
"There's a tremendous interest today in the paranormal, whether it's UFOs or out-of-body experiences or reincarnation or mystical phenomena," Kreskin says. "I don't believe in all of this myself, but it lends itself to tremendous discussion."

The famously sceptical performer, who celebrated his 80th birthday in January, rose to fame in the 1970s, when he became a familiar face throughout Canada and the US as the star of TV's *The Amazing World of Kreskin* and one of Johnny Carson's go-to guests on *The Tonight Show*. Though he's often been labelled a psychic, Kreskin has never claimed to have supernatural abilities and prefers to be called a mentalist or simply a thought-reader. He still performs as many as 364 shows a year, and continues to make headlines with high-profile predictions.

He says the dating site took about a year to put together, and that it was financed by investors in the US, Canada and Europe. While the idea for it didn't originate with him, he was happy to get involved.

"These people came to me and said, 'Kreskin, we know you've been associated with your work as a thought-reader and a mentalist all these years, and we'd like to name this after you,'" he explains. "I now have letters from people who've told me this is long overdue – that the public needed some way to be able to communicate on these topics, whether they're going to argue about them or share their experiences. We've got people all over the world who are becoming involved in this. It's really a social interaction that [members] tell me is kind of unique."

Don't expect guidance from beyond when it comes to finding your soulmate, though. Once you get past its basic conceit, the SDS pretty much works like any other online dating service. You fill out a profile, upload a photo, and provide some info about your areas of paranormal interest. From there, you can search for folks in your area who might like to join you the next time you scope out a haunted house, reminisce about past lives or



stake out a prime spot for UFO-watching.

But while Kreskin won't be acting as your personal matchmaker, he does have some words of advice for anyone hoping to put the "woo" in woo-woo.

"You don't have to reveal secret information about yourself," he says, "but you might start by first of all saying that you love to listen to other people's experiences, and that you know [there are people] out there who feel the same way."

For more information, visit amazingkreskinsupernaturaldatingsociety.com.

APRIL SNELLINGS

ENTRAILS

Vincenzo Natali will direct an adaptation of Stephen King and Joe Hill's novella *In the Tall Grass*. The story, which appeared in *Esquire* in 2012, follows a young man and his pregnant sister who are on a road trip when they respond to a boy's cry for help and end up fighting for their lives. Natali (TV's *The Strain* and *Hannibal*) adapted the screenplay himself and plans to begin principal photography in September.



King Kong is returning to Universal Studios in Orlando. Kong's previous attraction, Kongfrontation, ran from 1990 to 2002 and featured the big ape in New York. The new attraction, Skull Island: Reign of Kong, will see guests board expedition trucks that take them through jungles, temple ruins and past prehistoric beasts before meeting the ape. Skull Island will be park's longest ride when it opens in Summer 2016.

The movie adaptation of Stephen King's *It* has been shelved indefinitely. After getting tongues wagging by casting Will Poulter (*The Maze Runner*) as Pennywise for his two-part film adaptation of the bestselling novel, director Cary Fukunaga (*True Detective*) has pulled out of the New Line production due to creative clashes with the studio. It's unclear at this time whether the production, which has already been in development for a year and was slated to start shooting this month, will move forward.

NBC Universal's horror channel Chiller has announced its first original series, *Slasher*, airing late 2015, follows a young woman returning to her hometown only to find herself involved in a series of horrifying murders. Chiller also announced *Lifeforce*, a re-imagining of the 1985 Tobe Hooper movie about astronauts who discover a derelict alien spaceship (also premiering in late 2015), and *Siren*, a feature film adapted from David Bruckner's "Amateur Night" segment from *V/H/S* (airing in 2016).

After battling zombies in *Afterlife with Archie* and facing off with the Predator, Archie is now ready to tackle a Sharknado. Written by *Sharknado* director Anthony C. Ferrante with art by Dan Parent, the 48-page one-off comic sees Archie and his friends attempt to protect their hometown from – what else? – a tornado of sharks. The comic hits shelves on July 22, to coincide with the franchise's upcoming installment, *Sharknado 3: Oh Hell No!*

Emaji Entertainment is set to remake *Strangeland*, the 1998 horror movie (written by and starring Twisted Sister's Dee Snider) about two teens who go missing after meeting the mysterious Captain Howdy on the Internet. *Strangeland: Disciple* is said to be a reboot with Snider reprising his role as Howdy. Emaji also gained the remake rights to Joe Dante's *The Howling*, which will be the first production for the recently formed company.

CHARLOTTE STEAR

MONSTRO BIZARRO

An International Cryptozoology Conference, organized by Loren Coleman's International Cryptozoology Museum of Maine, will be held in St. Augustine, Florida, January 4 to 6, 2016. The event, based at the Casa Monica Hotel and limited to 150 attendees, will explore the scientific and popular culture aspects of cryptozoology through presentations, films and field trips. Speakers will include notable scientific and cryptozoological researchers and authors from around the globe, while related vendors will also be on hand. A special documentary about the movies *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (inspired by the 1938 discovery of the coelacanth fish) and *Revenge of the Creature* (filmed at Florida's Manneland) will also be screened. In addition, there will be excursions to Manneland's private museum and a nearby site where a large sea creature – believed to be a giant octopus – washed ashore in 1896. For more information, visit cryptozoonews.com.

LYLE BLACKBURN

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CORONER'S REPORT

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

CASE NO. 157

Some stuntmen working on *Mad Max: Fury Road* were so worried about getting pinned under the film's tanker truck if it rolled they unhooked their safety harnesses just before "action" was called so that they could be thrown free if it wrecked

According to Centers for Disease Control approximately eight people contract the bubonic plague each year in the United States

In April the *New York Post* interviewed Christopher Scarver serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer's jailhouse murderer Scarver contends he committed the crime because Dahmer "would fashion severed limbs out of prison food to taunt the other inmates."

Eddie Murphy was at one point considered for the role of the titular villain in 1992's *Candyman*; it ultimately went to Tony Todd

In April 2001, while digging his mother's grave, Minnesota's Floyd Hightshoe suffered a fatal heart attack and fell dead into the newly dug plot

Taphephobia is defined as the "fear of being buried alive."

In order for the camera to pick up the visible breath of the actors during the shooting of *The Exorcist*'s bedroom scene, the set had to be chilled to near freezing

Briton Christy Onwordi died in June 2002 after falling asleep with a plastic bag covering her freshly dyed hair. At some point during the night, the bag slid down over her face, suffocating her

Stanley Kubrick intentionally worked the colour red into virtually every shot in 1980's *The Shining*

"Autocide" is a term that specifically refers to the act of committing suicide via a motor vehicle

During Victorian times nymphomania in females was considered a treatable medical condition. One of the popular remedies involved attaching leeches to sufferer's vulva

Hearing is the last sense to leave a dying person

In Robert Bloch's 1959 novel *Psycho*, upon which Alfred Hitchcock's classic film is based, Norman Bates is middle-aged and unattractive

COMPILED BY MONICA S. KUEBLER

GOT A WEIRD STAT OR MORBID FACT? SEND IT TO: INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM



BODY HORROR

THE CREATURE

ARTIST: James Rowe (instagram.com/jrskrowe)

"The Creature from the Black Lagoon is one of the coolest of the Universal Monsters and has always been a favourite, so I was stoked to get to design and tattoo him in my own style.... This piece was done at Full Moon Tattoo and Horror Fest 2015 in Nashville on my friend Brandell Rector, the drummer for the horror punk band Silent Horror, and took around six hours."

HAVE A GREAT HORROR TAT? SHARE IT WITH US AT: INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM.

THE RUE MORGUE SICK TOP SIX

VICIOUS VEHICULAR EXTRACTIONS



1. **DEATH PROOF** — WHIPPED THROUGH WINDSHIELD BY STUNTMAN MIKE
2. **MAD MAX: FURY ROAD** — JOE'S JAW GETS JETTISONED
3. **THE CRAZIES** — LOOSED BY MAKESHIFT NOOSE
4. **JEEPERS CREEPERS 2** — CREEPER COLLECTS BUS RIDER'S CRANIUM
5. **TOWN THAT DREADED SUNDOWN** — SAMMY SAVAGELY SUCKED OUT OF WINDOW
5. **SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT** — STRANGED PSYCHO SANTA SLICES BILLY'S MOM

TORTURED TAGLINE

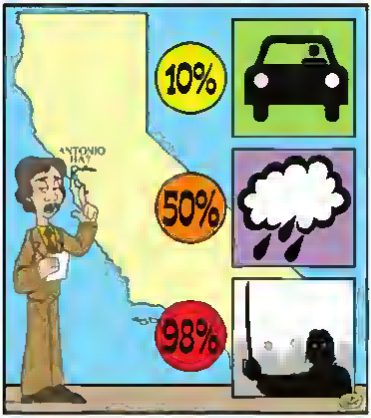


THE CANNIBAL MAN (1973)

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2 HORROR HANGERS

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Bedeck your pad with some classic horror villainy with this horror icon hanger by artist Trevor Henderson, measuring 25 inches tall when fully stretched out and printed on 100 lb glossy card stock. Michael comes with a gigantic kitchen knife and the blackest eyes ... the devil's eyes.

3 ZOMBIE SIGN

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Hang one of these ghoul guardians on a wall, door or garden fence and keep those pesky kids outta your azaleas! This steel Zombie Sign with a rusted finish comes with or without a post, courtesy of Zed's Zombie Ranch, folks who know quality signage, gardens and gut-munching!

4 WHITE BRONZE SKELETON ARMS NECKLACE

$125

Embrace the darkness, or, better yet, let the darkness embrace you with this beautifully macabre White Bronze Skeleton Arms Necklace by Gorey Details. Now the cold touch of Death can be your constant companion, or, at the very least, accompany you to your next late-night soiree.

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CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES

TOXIC CRUSADERS ACTION FIGURES

(Playmates, 1991)



The ultra-violent 1984 cult classic *The Toxic Avenger* spawned several sequels and, ironically enough, a children's animated TV series, *Toxic Crusaders* (1990-91). The cartoon led to the production of a variety of merchandise, including a line of colourful action figures and vehicles from Playmates. The approximately 4 ½-inch tall toys come with several accessories (e.g. Toxie has a mop, shield and glow-in-the-dark Blobbie) and unopened figures can be found on eBay for $20 to $30.

JAMES BURRELL

MORE CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES AT RUE-MORGUE

SCREAM

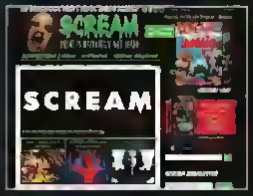
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***AMERICAN PSYCHO* DIRECTOR MARY HARRON REFLECTS ON FIFTEEN YEARS OF HER VICIOUSLY SATIRICAL ADAPTATION OF ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL NOVELS EVER WRITTEN**

HIP TO BE FEARED

BY ANDY BURNS



IN THE WORLD OF POP CULTURE, FEW BOOKS ARE AS CONTROVERSIAL AS *AMERICAN PSYCHO*, THE 1991 NOVEL BY BRET EASTON ELLIS.

At the time regarded as a member of the 1980s brat pack of writers that also included Jay McInerney and Tama Janowitz, Ellis had made his name at just 21 years old with his debut novel *Less Than Zero* (1985), the sensational bestseller about debauched teens in Los Angeles. Though his follow up, *The Rules of Attraction* (1987), about debauched university students, was less successful, it would introduce readers to Patrick Bateman, a minor player in the book who became the titular character in Ellis' third novel.

Set amidst the clubs, restaurants and offices of New York City in the late 1980s, *American Psycho* is the story of Bateman's seemingly mundane existence, told in first-person narrative. A young investment banker working on Wall Street, a master of the universe (with thanks to Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities*), the character is self-absorbed, narcissistic and materialistic. Bateman – keeping in step with his equally vain colleagues – wears the finest clothes, eats at the best restaurants (all of which are described in minute detail) and goes to clubs where he snorts coke in bathroom stalls. He also fucks. A lot. Sometimes with consent, sometimes without.

Had Ellis stopped there, he would have arguably created a fairly accurate portrayal of a Wall Street one percenter. But with Bateman, there is also his penchant for murder. Bloody, unhinged murder – mainly of women, though he has his way with children and animals as well. Throughout the novel, Bateman's sadistic killing style is consistently described in unrepentantly gory and, depending on your own views, offensive, clinical detail. Body parts are mutilated with axes and nail guns and orifices are violated (a rat being placed in the vagina of one of Bateman's victims being the most notorious example).

Even before its publication, *American Psycho* stirred up a fair share of controversy as an exercise in misogyny and pornography. The book's original publisher, Simon & Schuster, balked at releasing the novel due to "aesthetic differences." When it was picked up and released by Vintage Books in 1991, many stores in North America refused to stock it, in Australia, it was forbidden to sell it to minors, while other countries would only sell it shrink-wrapped. The novel's bad juju would increase tenfold in the mid-'90s, when it was alleged that Canadian serial killer and rapist Paul Bernardo owned a copy.

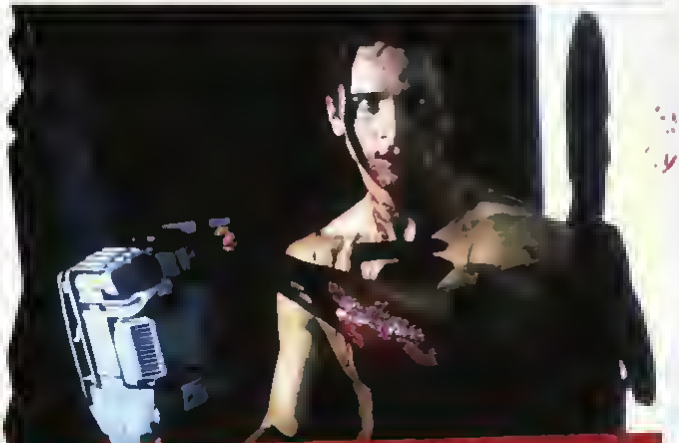
Burdened by its own reputation, many missed the fact that, at its core, *American Psycho* is a blackly satirical commentary on '80s culture and consumerism, a comedy of manners and mistaken identity. Interspersed between the chapters of horror are Bateman's insightful and hilarious essay-like diatribes about his favourite pop stars: Whitney Houston, Genesis and, most famously, Huey Lewis and the News (no live music for Bateman, though – he hates concerts).

These qualities didn't elude Canadian director Mary Harron, who, following the success of her first feature film *I Shot Andy Warhol* (1996), was given the opportunity to make a movie out of arguably the most reviled book of the last decade of the millennium. With an outstanding script, co-written by Harron and Guinevere Turner (see pg.19), and a young ensemble cast led by a mesmerizing Christian Bale as Patrick Bateman, the film version of *American Psycho* skillfully manages the horror, humour and social commentary of the novel in a manner few could have predicted.

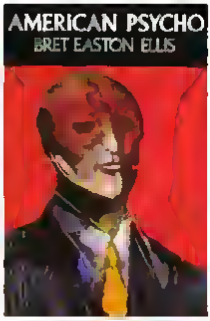
Perhaps even more amazing is how, in the fifteen years since the film's 2000 release, many of its memorable scenes have become ingrained into the collective pop culture consciousness. Bateman and his colleagues comparing business cards ("Look at that subtle off-white colourring") and the death of Paul Allan (Jared Leto) with "Hip To Be Square" playing have become instantly recognizable references.

On a cold February afternoon, Mary Harron talked to *Rue Morgue* about all things *American Psycho*: how it made its sometimes-troubled journey from novel to script to screen, why Christian Bale was the perfect Patrick Bateman and how the film continues to be discovered by a generation of fans who have never had to return some videotapes.





Tools Of The Trade: *Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale) with some of his most effective murder implements*



GOING BACK TO 1991, HOW AWARE WERE YOU OF THE BOOK *AMERICAN PSYCHO* AND THE CONTROVERSY THAT SURROUNDED IT?

I was living in England, working for the BBC, so I read it when it was first published in England. I had heard about it because I liked Bret Easton Ellis. I had read *Less Than Zero* and had really liked it. The first thing I knew was that one of the producers on the show I was working on, which was a late-night arts program, refused to do an item on *American Psycho*, even though she hadn't read it and didn't feel she needed to read it to make a stand. So I got a copy and it was one of those things – if you were reading it on the subway, you felt like people were looking at you strangely. But as soon as I started reading it, I was very struck by how funny it was and how satirical it was. It reminded me of Evelyn Waugh, who I love – early Evelyn Waugh, blackly comic novels about English society. So I thought it was very black social comedy. Then I hit the first really violent bit, [the death of the character] Bethany, and I had to stop reading for about a month, it was so upsetting. But then I did pick it up again and nothing else is as terrible as that sequence. I found it very fascinating, a very experimental book. I thought it was very avant-garde in a way. It was playing with structure and the way it shifted point of view was very interesting. But I never, ever would have thought, "Oh, I must make a movie out of this."

WHAT PEOPLE PROBABLY MISSED AT THE TIME, BECAUSE OF THE VIOLENCE THROUGHOUT, IS THAT IT'S ALSO A VERY FUNNY BOOK.

It's a really terrific comedy of manners, a very black comedy of manners. And to me, it's like, how come people don't see this? All they saw was the violence.

IN THE DECADE THAT FOLLOWED, AND THE PROCESS OF "TURNING *AMERICAN PSYCHO* INTO" A FILM BEGAN, A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE ATTACHED TO BRINGING IT TO LIFE.



Corporate Cutthroat: *Patrick examines himself in the mirror during sex, and (below) a post-murder cigarette break.*

> "BASICALLY, HE'S A MONSTER AND THERE'S NO EXPLAINING IT."
> -MARY HARRON

HOW DID YOU WIND UP INVOLVED?

Yes, Stuart Gordon was attached. David Cronenberg was attached; Norman Snider, who had written *Dead Ringers*, had written a script. Bret Easton Ellis had written a script. Stuart Gordon was interested in it as a real horror movie; he wanted to do it in black and white. And then my first film was at Sundance and I got a call from Roberta Hanley. She and her husband Chris had a production company [Muse Productions]. She had actually written a script for *American Psycho* herself that wasn't getting off the ground. She had done her take on it. We had a mutual friend, Larry Gross, who had seen *I Shot Andy Warhol* at Sundance and he had recommended me to them because he had said to them that I could create a world. So, when I got this call, I had already been offered some scripts, as you are when your first film is at Sundance and it does well but they were kind of sentimental and mainstream.

SO YOU WERE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING MORE CHALLENGING?

A couple things occurred to me. I didn't even know how you make a movie out of *American Psycho*. I didn't know if you could make a movie out of this book, but I'd try to write a script. The other thing was, if I took on *American Psycho*, it would definitely keep me on the edge so that I would not start making things that were soft or mainstream. This project was so out there it would force me to stay on the outer limits somewhere, because I thought this is something really challenging. That was really appealing to me. And then, maybe the most appealing thing was that just enough time had passed that you could make a film about the 1980s and you could make a satire on it. I had a lot of feelings about the '80s, I had spent a lot of time in New York, I had been in restaurants and nightclubs. I thought that would be a fun thing to tackle and that there was something to say about it. In the end, I don't think it's just a film about the '80s at all, and it became less so as we were making it, but there was the initial impulse of, 'Oh, this will be fun to do."

WERE YOU CONCERNED AT ALL ABOUT THE BOOK'S MISOGYNIST REPUTATION?

I had just done *I Shot Andy Warhol* about Valerie Solanas. My friend Guinevere [Turner] and I were already writing a film about Betsey Page together, and I thought, 'Well, if I get Guin,' who had just done the first mainstream lesbian romantic comedy [*Go Fish*] at Sundance a couple years before, and you know where she stands, and I had just done this film about Valerie Solanas, you know, so just *try* to accuse us of misogyny. Our credentials are very good. It's easier for us to tackle it because we're not scared of it.

WHAT WAS YOUR WRITING PROCESS LIKE?

We started writing in 1996. We started going through the book and we started writing out all the dialogue we liked and bits of the scenes we liked. We started at page one and just wrote down what we liked in some sort of rough scene form, and then it was a question of making a structure out of it. Clearly what we both gravitated towards most was the comedy. And obviously you have to have the violence and the murders. I think my greatest contribution, my one really great idea, was... it occurred to me that you could take those chapters of music criticism and make them monologues. That meant, if [Patrick Bateman] did the first monologue and he killed Paul [Jared Leto], then every time he started talking about music, you'd feel that he was going to kill somebody and you'd be scared. That was my big idea and it helped, in a way, to give it more structure, the murders would each have that theme. It's funny because some projects take a long time to write. Guin and I went to Mexico for a week or ten days, and a couple of friends came down and stayed with us. We wrote every day. We really broke the back of it then. It came together quite quickly. I thought it was going to be so difficult but of all the scripts I've worked on, it was the easiest. Bret's dialogue is really, really good. It's great film dialogue.

ONCE YOUR SCRIPT WAS COMPLETED, HOW EASY WAS IT TO ACTUALLY GET THE FILM MADE?

We went to a lot of people and pitched it and they all turned it down. I remember somebody saying, "Are people going to walk out of this film feeling that the world is a better place?" And I thought, "No, I hope not. That's not really the point of it." [Laughs] A lot of people wanted more psychology, and I was very adamant I was not going to give him a reason for the murders. I wasn't going to

FOR *AMERICAN PSYCHO* SCREENWRITER GUINEVERE TURNER, PUTTING BRET EASTON ELLIS' SADISTIC MASS MURDERER ONSCREEN MEANS LIVING WITH HIS LEGACY

AN IDEA OF A PATRICK BATEMAN



ANDY BURNS

THOUGH SHE'S A CO-ARCHITECT IN BRINGING ONE OF LITERATURE'S MOST NOTORIOUSLY EVIL CHARACTERS TO LIFE, YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT SCREENWRITER AND ACTRESS GUINEVERE TURNER IS NOT A BIG FAN OF THE GENRE SHE MADE HER BONES IN.

"A little known fact about me is I hate horror movies," says Turner with a laugh, on the phone from Beverly Hills. "I'm just a big scaredy cat. I don't even watch horror movie trailers. I have nightmares. People think I'm one of those badass chicks who loves them. I had to be tricked into seeing *Silence of the Lambs*. Same with *Let the Right One In*. My friends tricked me into seeing that. I was, like, "'Fuck you guys!'"

Turner managed to suppress her fears, however, when it came to co-writing the big-screen adaptation of Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* with director Mary Harron. Turner, who also plays Elizabeth in the film (pictured), had already made a name for herself within indie circles when she co-wrote and starred in the groundbreaking 1994 romantic lesbian comedy *Go Fish*. Prior to delving into the world of Patrick Bateman, she was already familiar with Ellis' work, having been a fan of his first novel, *Less Than Zero*. "I had read that and I had a lot of envy of him when I was in college," remembers Turner. "He and I are around the same age. He was this whiz kid and I was writing short fiction. I had a lot of 'I want to be famous and cool and have a book published when I was only 24,' or however old he was. So I was aware of him, but I wasn't aware of the feminist uproar around *American Psycho*."

She would first read that book at the behest of her friend Harron. Recalls Turner, "When Mary asked me to read *American Psycho*, she said, 'I know you're going to hate this, but there's a great movie here.' And there was. It was hilarious. He's a really funny man, that Bret Ellis."

One would think Turner might have found it intimidating to work on adapting one of the '90s most divisive pieces of art, but she says that wasn't quite the case. "The stress of it, the challenge of it, was that so much of it is in Patrick Bateman's head," she says. "So much of the book is just what he's thinking. So it was really hard to manifest that in a visual medium. And then some of the most hilarious parts of the book don't even have a plot. It's just him talking about Huey Lewis and the News. The book really defied adaptation, to Bret's credit."

To *their* credit, by bringing to life a story that had been written off by many as pornographic, explotive or misogynist, Harron and Turner managed to accomplish the unthinkable. Still, years later, in the face of ongoing acclaim for the film and critical reappraisal of the novel, not everyone has jumped on board the *American Psycho* love train. Among the longstanding naysayers is feminist icon Gloria Steinem, who not only allegedly implored Leonardo DiCaprio to not take the role of Patrick Bateman, but who also later became Christian Bale's stepmother.



"I met her at a party last year," recalls Turner, "I was just excited to meet the mother of modern feminism. I was chatting with her and my big-mouth friend said, 'So you know she wrote *American Psycho*.' And I thought, 'No! Don't tell her that, she's not going to like me.' I don't think Gloria Steinem had fully absorbed what my friend had said, she just heard '*American Psycho*.' And she said to me, 'I think whoever made that movie was molested as a child!' [Laughs] I thought, 'Please don't ruin your image for me. You just don't understand that I'm one of the people that made that movie.'"

Then there's the author himself, Bret Easton Ellis, whose last major work was the screenplay to the critically lambasted 2013 Lindsay Lohan vehicle, *The Canyons*, and is someone Turner considers a friend.

"He started out by saying he liked the movie," she says. "But once *The Canyons* came out and once he started to go nuts on Twitter, he started to say the book never should have been made into a movie. That's a weird thing to say. Obviously, it's a well-loved movie. People who love horror films love *American Psycho*."



Bateman Beauties: *Two of Patrick's victims on the floor of his bathroom.*

give him an unhappy childhood or a traditional psychology because I felt like that would just ruin it. That wasn't in the book and that wasn't part of the story. Basically, he's a monster and there's no explaining it.

HE JUST IS.

He just *is*. It's not a realistic story. He's a construct. He's a scary construct and a funny construct. And once you make it an emotional story with real psychology, it just ruins it, I think. So that was a problem. People didn't get that. Luckily, executive producer Mike Paseornek at Lionsgate had a very good sense of humour and he really liked it. And then we started the casting drama.

HOW EXACTLY OIO CHRISTIAN BALE GET INVOLVEO?

I met Christian in May or June of '97. He was on my list of young actors. I had been at a party with [director] Todd Haines, who had just directed Christian in *Velvet Goldmine* and he said, "He's the best actor I've ever worked with." So I was intrigued. We sent him the script and then he didn't respond forever. He finally sat down and read it and called the next day all excited. He auditioned for me in my apartment with my newborn baby. I only auditioned two people. I met with a lot of people. I met with Jared Leto, but I auditioned Christian and Robert Sean Leonard around the same week. My husband (who I trust most about casting, apart from my casting director) said, "Oh yeah, this is it" when I showed him the tape that night. [Christian] has a darkness. You felt like there was something unfathomable, unknowable. He had this sort of humour, he got the comedy, and he got something really dark and scary.

HOW MUCH DISCUSSION ABOUT THE CHARACTER OID YOU AND CHRISTIAN HAVE PRIOR TO ACTUALLY FILMING?

We had a lot of phone calls. He would call up with notes and questions. We got this idea that Bateman was a kind of alien who didn't understand human behaviour and was trying to work out how to be a human being. Christian worked up different modes [for the character]. When he was with different people, he was in different modes. When he was with Paul Allen, he was really happy. And then when he was with the prostitutes, he'd seen some vintage magazine ads for *Esquire* or for *Playboy* of a man in a dinner jacket, a man at his best. And that's what he said Bateman was trying to be: a man at his best. So he comes to the door wearing a tuxedo. He'd be all suave – that was the image he was trying to convey. But then it all goes wrong. It doesn't live up to his expectations. She's not blonde enough or pretty enough and he just gets annoyed. And then with the Whitney Houston, that was him in his romantic mode, talking about "The Greatest Love of All." He'd worked it out very precisely. He got a voice coach. And then I said to him, "You might want to go and work out a bit." [laughs] and the rest is history. That's one of the things people remember. Christian's incredible physical transformation.

ALONG WITH CHRISTIAN, *AMERICAN PSYCHO* FEATURES A CAST OF YOUNG ACTORS WHO WOULO GO ON TO OO INCREOIBLE THINGS. HOW OIO CHLOE SEVIGNY ANO REESE WITHERSPOON BECOME INVOLVEO?

Justin had been in my first movie so I knew him from that. Chloe did not have to audition – I knew her as well. Reese had done *Election* and she was great in that. It really helped me that Reese signed on, which I'll always be grateful for. She was very up and coming, and had great reviews in *Election*, but she hadn't done *Legally Blonde* yet.

ONCE YOU HAD THIS CAST TOGETHER ANO HAD FINALLY GOTTEN OVER THE VARIOUS HURDLES YOU HAD TO GO THROUGH BEFORE GETTING BEHIND THE CAMERA, YOU WOUND UP FILMING IN TORONTO, WHICH GENERATED A LOT OF CONTROVERSY FROM A PROTEST GROUP..

You know, that whole Concerned Canadians Against Violence in Entertainment thing, was one woman and a fax machine. It was one of those totally manufactured crises. That was a real lesson, because when I got back to New York, people were like, "Oh, that's terrible, there were demonstrations, they shut down filming." No, nobody ever demonstrated. There was nobody ever there. It was just one woman and a fax machine complaining to the papers and we lost all our locations. One day there was an article in *The Toronto Sun*, and within an hour we'd lost every corporate location, which turned out to be a good thing, because they had to put some more money in and have us film on a stage, which was much, much better. [Production designer] Gideon [Ponte] designed all those great sets for the apartment and the office. It was actually a great thing that happened. And you know, it was all about that [rumour] *American Psycho* had influenced Paul Bernardo. I actually got a letter from somebody that had written a book about the case and said, "I want you to know, Paul Bernardo never read a book in his life. He certainly never read *American Psycho*." His crimes started before the book was published. These things are all legends and myths.

MARY HARRON GIVES US THE PAINFUL DETAILS ON THE MAINSTREAM VERSION OF *AMERICAN PSYCHO* THAT ALMOST WAS...

HOLLYWOOD HATCHETS

ANDY BURNS

EXPERIENCING ROWING PAINS AS A SCREENPLAY IS BROUGHT TO LIFE IS PRETTY MUCH PAR FOR THE COURSE IN HOLLYWOOD.

Writers, directors and actors often come and go on a project, sometimes at a moment's notice, other times after they've spent months or years attached. While this sort of insider gossip is now a staple of internet reporting, back in the late '90s, as Mary Harron was working to get her adaptation of *American Psycho* off the ground, the general public was typically unaware of the business of moviemaking.

Unless, of course, one of the biggest names in Hollywood suddenly expressed an interest in a film – which is what happened when, in 1997, Leonardo DiCaprio decided he wanted to star as Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho*.

"One of the producers called me up and said, 'Are you sitting down? Lionsgate wants to give the movie to Leonardo DiCaprio and pay him $20 million, but keep the film's budget at $6 million,'" director Mary Harron recalls. "[DiCaprio] was coming off *Titanic* and he decided this was the first film he wanted to be in after it. I said that was the stupidest thing I'd ever heard, it's a really bad idea."

For starters, Harron had already committed to Christian Bale in the role of Patrick Bateman, a decision that never totally sat well with the studio, since he wasn't yet a big name star. Plus, DiCaprio had developed a huge fan base of teenage girls almost overnight, who were an audience the studio would want to cater to. Not to mention, Harron simply didn't believe he was right for the part.

"He's a great actor," she says. "But that's not the right role for him. He's too poetic. And [in the film] there's a lot of stuff about mistaken identity. They all had to be chiselled, vaguely similar guys, and it's hard to get a group of guys together who all look like Leonardo DiCaprio."

Harron wouldn't budge and was fired, after developing the project for years.

"You realize when there's a lot of money at stake who you are and what you do doesn't matter," she says. "I had never encountered that before. It's a sobering thing."

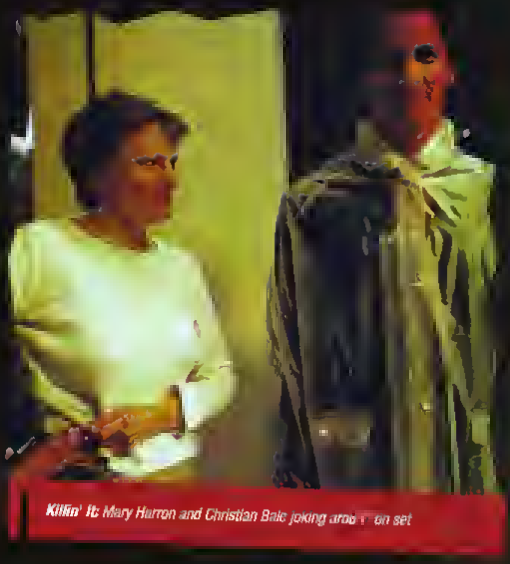
With the film off her plate, Harron found new ways to spend her time, getting married and working on a script about pin-up model Bettie Page with her *American Psycho* co-writer, Guinevere Turner. In the meantime, names such as Martin Scorsese and Danny Boyle were being thrown around as her possible replacements. Oliver Stone eventually wound up filling the director's chair, while Cameron Diaz would attend a reading with Stone and DiCaprio. Despite the blockbuster potential, the new cast and crew just created more problems.

"After that reading in Oliver Stone's office, they could not agree on script changes," says Harron. "They were trying to make it a more Jekyll and Hyde story to show a good side to Patrick, as well as the bad. Nobody could work it out ... And then, in a great moment for me, Leo decides to go off to do *The Beach*."

With DiCaprio no longer a factor, Harron was asked to return, but with one glaring caveat: she could not cast Christian Bale in the role of Patrick Bateman. At that point, determined to still make the movie she wanted, Harron went about strategizing how to get her star back. She gave the studio a list of six potential actors she would go to about starring in the film, high-profile names including Matt Damon, Ben Affleck and Ewan McGregor. There was a certifiable method to her madness.

"They were people I knew would not do it because they were too famous," she explains. "We got Christian to call Ewan, a friend of his, and say, 'Please don't do this.' [The studio] wanted Vince Vaughn, but I said he couldn't do it because he's just doing *Psycho*. The only person who I was scared would do it was Ed Norton, but in the end, luckily, he didn't want to do it, or couldn't do it."

With all other possibilities exhausted, Lionsgate "very grudgingly and exhaustedly" agreed to Bale, and Harron made the film she envisioned. "It was a life lesson about how tough the business can be," she recalls.



Killin' It: *Mary Harron and Christian Bale joking around on set*

ONE THING ABOUT BOTH THE BOOK AND YOUR FILM IS THAT IT REALLY IS INDEFINABLE. IT HAS THESE WICKEDLY FUNNY MOMENTS; IT'S A SOCIAL COMMENTARY; OR YOU CAN LOOK AT IT SIMPLY AS A HORROR FILM. DID YOU EVER CONSIDER DOING IT AS A STRAIGHT HORROR FILM?

No, absolutely not. It never occurred to me. It has horror elements, God bless them, but if it were just that it wouldn't be interesting. That's not a criticism of the horror genre. I think all good horror is about something else at the same time, in the same way that Hitchcock's *Psycho* is about other things. In this case, it's very meta. It's a commentary on horror movies.

I THINK SOME PEOPLE WHO HAVEN'T SEEN THE FILM OR READ THE BOOK THINK THE STORY ITSELF IS JUST SOMEONE WHO GOES AND KILLS WOMEN AND CHILDREN, BUT IT'S MORE WELL-ROUNDED THAN THAT, AND PATRICK BATEMAN IS CERTAINLY NOT A COOL MOVIE MONSTER OR MANIAC.

The big thing that we wanted to avoid was to make Patrick cool, and I think that's what a male director probably would have done, to make him sexy and cool, which would have been a big pitfall. Most young American actors would have wanted to make Patrick sexy and cool, where as Christian and Guin and I were all on the same page. We wanted to make him kind of absurd and somewhat pathetic. I think Bret would have liked him to be sexy and cool. It's a shame Christian doesn't do more comedy because the way he caught the insecurity and absurdity and social anxiety of Patrick was really great.

THE PAUL ALLEN MURDER, WITH HUEY LEWIS AND THE NEWS' "HIP TO BE SQUARE" PLAYING, HAS MADE IT INTO THE POP CULTURE VERNACULAR...

We rehearsed that scene and Christian said, "I think I'm going to try and moonwalk." I thought that was hilarious. We talked about how he was revving himself up to the killing, and when he did it, he did it with fantastic intensity.



WAS THERE A PLAN B IF YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GET THE RIGHTS TO THE SONGS USED?

It really was hard because we tried to get a list of records we could use as an alternative, and nothing really worked. I don't know what we would have done. [The music] was very specially chosen. You couldn't have anything British. You couldn't have anything too interesting. For whatever reason, those songs are perfect. Bret put them in the book for a reason.



Burying The Hatchet: Patrick prepares to murder the completely oblivious Paul Allen (Jared Leto).

"IT'S A COMMENTARY ON HORROR MOVIES."
-MARY HARRON

WHEN THE FINISHED FILM FINALLY SCREENED AT SUNDANCE, WHAT WAS THE REACTION?

People were extremely divided. Some people thought it was a disastrous premiere. One of our friends or relatives was on the ski slopes at Sundance and heard someone say, "Ugg, *American Sucko*." [Laughs] People didn't know what to make of it. Nobody knew if they should laugh. It didn't get a single nomination in America. Christian didn't get a single nomination, which is amazing for that performance. But it had a great review in the *New York Times*, which is always nice, and *Entertainment Weekly*. But it had a lot of bad reviews.

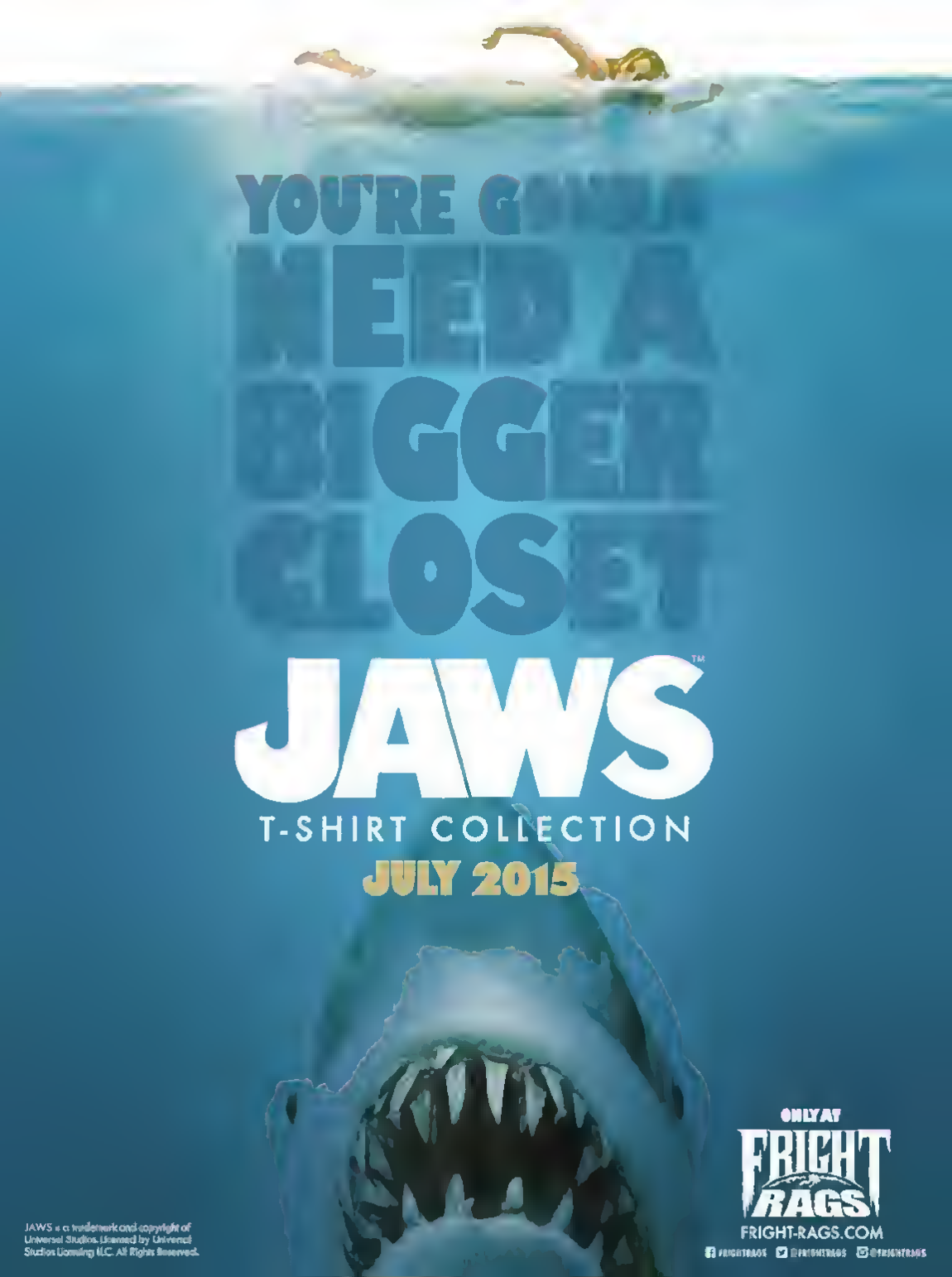
DID THE FILM GET THE SORT OF REACTION YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD?

I think so. I had no idea what to expect. I knew it was controversial. I knew some people really loved it. And then someone called me up from Lionsgate and told me it had done really well in foreign. It made $25 million foreign and $15 million domestic. And then fast forward five years, and I'm shooting an episode of *Six Feet Under* and [feminist author] Susie Bright was in the cast and she said, "Oh, I was just watching *American Psycho*, that's such a great movie, how come more people don't talk about it?" That was 2005. People wouldn't say that now. Now I'm bored talking about it. [Laughs] You know what I mean? Now you kind of want to move on, but I'm glad it got its attention. I'm grateful the way it unfolded.

DO YOU THINK PEOPLE FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH IT AFTER ALL THIS TIME?

I think Netflix was very big. I think Christian's success has been very helpful. It's funny, it always had an interesting audience. I did an episode of *The L Word* and Snoop Dogg was in it and he said told me he had six copies of it! And that was in 2002. Certain people were very keen on it. All you really want when you make a film is for people to keep watching it and if it takes a couple of years, maybe that's better. I'd rather have people like it more ten or fifteen years afterwards than like it less.

Thanks to Annie Hennessey for helping make this interview happen. Andy Burns is the author of Wrapped In Plastic: Twin Peaks *and a forthcoming book on* American Psycho.


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HOLLYWOOD SURVIVOR JOE DANTE RETURNS WITH BURYING THE EX, A MOVIE THAT PROVES YOU CAN'T KEEP A DETERMINED DIRECTOR – OR A BAD GIRLFRIEND – DOWN

LOVE YOU TO DEATH

by MICHAEL DOYLE



THESE DAYS IT SEEMS THERE ARE AS MANY FANS NURSING AN ACUTE DISAFFECTION FOR THE ZOMBIE MOVIE AS THERE ARE THOSE MULTITUDES STILL HUNGRY FOR MORE.

As *The Walking Dead* continues to corral huge audiences on television and mainstream offerings such as *World War Z* darken multiplexes, the rot of discontent is setting in ever... so... slowly. Some observers suggest this zombie vogue is rooted in our fears of overpopulation and the growing sense of alienation and disempowerment many of us feel in the modern world. Others insist it exemplifies the poverty of new ideas being implemented in horror entertainment and is evidence of our voracious appetite for violent imagery. We simply love seeing brains exploding from ruptured heads, shuffling hordes tearing flesh like cheesecloth and slippery intestines unspooling out of bodies.

With these cogitations in mind, news that the end of June sees the VOD and limited theatrical release of *Burying the Ex* – a more restrained adjunct to this abundant subgenre – may not arouse much excitement. However, those about to beat a screaming retreat should take note: this latest undead item comes courtesy of Joe Dante, he who unleashed a school of mail-cious fishes in *Piranha*, unshackled a neurotic pack of beastly bipeds in *The Howling*, marshalled an anarchic invasion of unruly creatures in *Gremlins*, and decamped a creepy brood of serial killers in a benign neighbourhood in *The 'Burbs*. Despite this impressive résumé, *Rue Morgue* still feels compelled to ask the veteran director a burning question: does the world really need another zombie film?

"The answer to that is probably no," says Dante, laughing. "Not only that, do I even need another zombie film? I've already done zombies [in 2005's *Masters of Horror* entry *Homecoming* and the 2009 web-series *Splatter*]. *Burying the Ex* is a project that came to me because the writer, Alan Trezza, had made a short film on his own – which I still haven't seen – and then turned it into a feature script. When I read it, I found it less of a zombie movie and more of a romantic comedy. ... Basically, the hero can't bring himself to break up with his girlfriend because he doesn't want to hurt her feelings. I think that dilemma is a relatable one for a lot of people as we all find ourselves in that situation at one time or another. For me, that element was more interesting than the fact his dead girlfriend rises from the grave as a zombie. That was merely the McGuffin we used to get her back into his life."





'Till Death Do Us Part: *Max (Anton Yelchin) reunited with Evelyn (Ashley Greene), and (top) Max with new love Olivia (Alexandra Daddario) at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery.*

The beleaguered hero of *Burying the Ex* is Max (*Fright Night's* Anton Yelchin), a horror movie buff who works in a memorabilia store called Blood Mary's (originally Scary Mary's until Dante discovered a business with that sobriquet actually existed). Max's relationship with his drop-dead gorgeous but controlling girlfriend, Evelyn (Ashley Greene of the *Twilight* saga), hits the skids as soon as they move in together. Despite this, Max can't summon the courage required to dump his whip-cracking lover. At the urging of his sex-crazed half-brother, Travis (Oliver Cooper), Max finally decides to break up with Evelyn, but before he can deliver the bad news, fate grimly intercedes and she is killed in a freak accident.

After a brief interval of mourning, Max begins a new romance with Olivia (*True Detective's* Alexandra Daddario), a kooky "I scream" seller who shares his passion for horror. One dark night, things get seriously complicated when Evelyn crawls out of her grave, restored to an undead existence by a "Satan Genie," a demonic totem in Max's store that promises to "Make any want, wish or desire yours – the evil way!" Now an embalming fluid-spewing fly-magnet with a growing appetite for human flesh, her one desire is to once again worm her way into Max's heart and be with him "always and forever" – even if this means turning her reluctant beau into a zombie!

"Alan and I had been flogging this project around town for years," recalls Dante. "It sometimes looked like it might happen but then it wouldn't. Then *World War Z* came out and was a surprise hit – especially after the bad press it received about its production problems – and zombies were no longer relegated to cult status. There was this sudden realization from [producers] that mainstream audiences like zombie movies and maybe we should make some more of them. So we rode that wave of enthusiasm, but this meant we only had a very short window in which we could make *Burying the Ex*. In fact, they were still looking for money while we were shooting! So this production was a real return to the under-the-gun days of the New World Pictures era for me."

Labouring on a stringent budget and hammered by a ball-busting twenty-day shooting schedule, *Burying the Ex* was further restricted to a finite number of locations – all confined within a seven-block radius of Los Angeles. Despite this, one unmistakable landmark that features in the movie is the Hollywood Forever cemetery – one of the city's oldest graveyards. Located behind Paramount Pictures, many celebrities have gone to their final rest there, including John Huston, Peter Lorre and Johnny Ramone (whose resplendent grave appears prominently in one scene).

"[Hollywood Forever] is filled with monuments, which was important as most new cemeteries don't have many monuments and tombstones – they have plaques," explains Dante. "When you visit them, they look like golf courses and it's hard to get classic horror movie scares out of a graveyard with no graves! So it was very useful in that sense and – because this is a very LA movie – one of the things Hollywood Forever is famous for is they have these special movie nights. You can go there and watch films which are projected on the walls of the crypts and mausoleums. So you occasionally find there are a lot of live people there as well as dead ones!"

This tradition plays directly into the film's narrative and movie culture milieu as Max and Olivia head to Hollywood Forever to catch a late-night screening of *Night of the Living Dead*. Whereas George A. Romero's epochal *Dead* films use the zombie as a means of conveying a larger metaphorical point regarding issues such as racism, consumerism and individualism, Dante admits to harbouring no such inclinations at socio-political commentary. Indeed, he submits that the undead industry that has virulently sprung forth from Romero's mythology is a perversion of what the zombie's true origins are, as he illustrates.

"Before George made *Night of the Living Dead*, zombies were in the Caribbean and were largely black people. If they were portrayed as white people it would then be in something like *White Zombie*. The best film of this early Haitian voodoo mythos was *I Walked with a Zombie*, but when George later made his film I don't remember anyone actually referring to them as zombies. In fact, they were really ghouls – bodies that had come up from the grave to eat human flesh. Later, when the Italians started ripping off George's movies, they began calling them all zombies. Suddenly, there was this plethora of films which



THE SUBJECT OF A NEW DOCUMENTARY, LEGENDARY CHARACTER ACTOR AND JOE DANTE MAINSTAY DICK MILLER TELLS US WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE...

THAT GUY!

MICHAEL DOYLE

THERE ARE BRAINIACS AND THEN THERE'S ALBERT EINSTEIN. THERE ARE HOT BLONDES AND THEN THERE'S MARILYN MONROE. THERE ARE LEGENDARY CHARACTER ACTORS AND THEN THERE'S DICK MILLER!

With the release of *That Guy Dick Miller* (out now on DVD and VOD by Indiecan Entertainment) – a documentary on the man known for his Roger Corman collaborations and for appearing in almost every Joe Dante movie – *Rue Morgue* catches up with the 85-year-old thespian to discuss his incomparable career



WAS IT ALWAYS YOUR AMBITION TO BECOME AN ACTOR?

No, I started out as a singer then became a writer. It just so happened that I met Roger Corman and a series of funny events led to my becoming an actor. Roger was like a mentor to me as I knew very little about the movie business. I'd done some acting but nothing that allowed me to call myself a real actor. Back then, Rogsr and I were just starting out and we learned the business together. During my first conversation with him, Roger asked, "What do you do?" I said, "I'm a writer." He said, "We don't need writers, we need actors." I said, "Hey, guess what? *I'm* an actor!" [Laughs]

ONE OF YOUR MOST FAMOUS COLLABORATIONS WITH CORMAN IS A *BUCKET OF BLOOD*.

I get asked about that movie a lot. *A Bucket of Blood* is a strange and serious film. I don't know why it continues to fascinate people, but I do know that nearly 60 years after it was made that picture still holds up. It was inexpensive to make, but the story just seems to work. I certainly had no idea at the time it would be *that* great

WHAT DO YOU RECALL ABOUT WORKING WITH BORIS KARLOFF ON *THE TERROR*?

I loved working with Boris! I think he's one of the all-time greats of acting. Roger had a couple of days extra on Boris' contract so they just started shooting scenes. They had no script – no idea of where the story was heading. They simply shot Boris walking up and down halls, and up and down stairs. Roger eventually said, "Don't worry, Boris, we'll write something about why all this is happening." Two or three months later, Roger called me and said, "We're making a picture called *The Terror* and you're going to love it." I said, "What's it about?" He said, "I don't know!"

WHAT WAS YOUR WORST EXPERIENCE IN THE BUSINESS?

I once worked for a director – I shouldn't say this – but it was Mr. [Jim] Wynorski. He had the habit of always talking and giving directions while you were acting. I finally said to him, "Hey, between cut and action you can talk all you want, but between action and cut – leave me alone!" [Laughs]

WHAT CONTINUALLY DRAWS YOU BACK TO WORKING WITH JOE DANTE?

It's a strange relationship but I think of Joe as my son. He'd probably be insulted to hear that, but I really do. Whenever I've been in trouble or been unhappy, Joe has always been there for me. The highlights of my life seem to be around Joe. I really like the guy. I also think Joe was a great director for me because he always left me alone

WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORIES OF *GREMLINS*?

When we started making *Gremlins*, Mr. Futterman seemed to be just an ordinary part. But when *Gremlins* was finished and I looked it, I realized that Futterman was a wonderful part. Of course, he was then killed in his own living room – crushed by that [snowplough]. I later heard that Joe was planning a sequel and somebody said, "Don't worry, we'll have this guy announcing from the hospital that Futterman survived and is alive and well." That's how I got to come back from the dead in *Gremlins 2*.

NOW YOU'VE COME OUT OF RETIREMENT TO PLAY "CRUSTY OLD COP" IN *BURYING THE EX*.

Yeah. When I finished shooting the documentary *That Guy Dick Miller*, I thought it was my final film. Then I suddenly started working again, and one of the pictures I did was *Burying the Ex*. My cameo was meant to be a gag, but it was nice to be working with Joe again and I like the movie very much


A Bucket of Blood

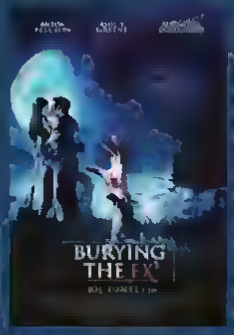
are not necessarily zombie movies – they are more like dead people movies. In *Burying the Ex*, we did call [Evelyn] a zombie because it's one of the epithets that Oliver Cooper's character throws at her, but that's not what they are – they are ghouls!"

Despite extracting from such putrescent precursors as Romero and EC Comics, the modest charms of *Burying the Ex* reside in Dante's customary ability to exhume attendant clichés and repurpose them with riotous invention and knowing wit. These qualities have come to characterize much of his best work, but he is quick to stress his latest picture aspires to be nothing more than a lively exercise in genre cross-breeding – or to borrow an appellation first trotted out by the makers of *Shaun of the Dead* – a rom-zom-com.

"*Burying the Ex* isn't the world's most subtle story," concedes Dante. "It's presented in what I guess you could call a *Creepshow* kind of way – you know, those movies that have effectively tried to ape the look and graphic style of comic books. It's very rare that approach is done well, but I think *Creepshow* and *Danger: Diabolik* did it well enough that you could say they are both comic book movies. *Burying the Ex* doesn't look too much like a comic book movie – because it simply didn't have the art direction prowess to be able to achieve that – but it's shot kind of like a graphic novel."

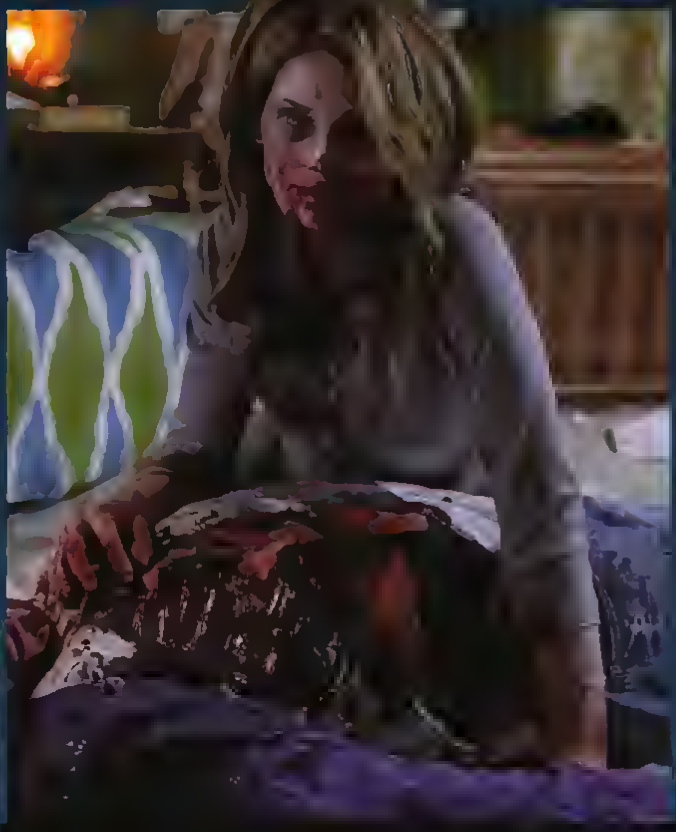
In mining the same maggoty ground as previous zombie flicks, *Burying the Ex* embraces some of their pervasive plot wheezes and shares similarities with last year's *Life After Beth*. Dante insists he only learned of that film's existence after shooting had already commenced on his movie, but admits he was tempted to reference Emilio Miraglia's 1971 shocker *The Night Evelyn Came out of the Grave* – thus maintaining the self-reflexive nature of his esoteric oeuvre. Indeed, *Burying the Ex* is spiked with clips from the likes of *Plan Nine from Outer Space*, *The Gore Gore Girls* and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula*. It also features several items of movie memorabilia from Dante's personal collection as well as a number of classic posters – most of which are public domain in America but not necessarily elsewhere around the world.

"I was limited in what I could use because lawyers are always very picky about stuff," he groans. "They're like, 'There is no such thing as public domain! We must pay somebody!' A lot of times we couldn't find anybody to pay. I wanted to use *Black Sabbath* and I shot a scene using this fabulous Italian poster. I had to re-colour and change it in post-production because *Black Sabbath* was a French-Italian-Spanish co-production and they couldn't find one of the producers. You'll still recognize the poster in the movie because it retains a similar design, but it's under a different title. It now reads *Zombie in the Attic* in Italian. Amazingly, the technology exists to be able to do that but I'll never make another film that features lots of posters. I could never have made *Matinee* today as it would've cost an incredible amount of money to have paid for all those posters."



Another hallmark of Dante's cinema is a dependable appearance by Dick Miller – the ubiquitous King of Character Actors. The legendary player has a cameo in *Burying the Ex* as "Crusty Old Cop," sustaining a fruitful relationship that stretches back nearly 40 years and 23 collaborations – commencing with Dante's satirical 1976 debut effort *Hollywood Boulevard*.

"Dick is my good luck charm," the cineaste chirps. "I've managed to get him into nearly every picture I've ever done. Like a number of actors I've used frequently, he's a good friend. When you make these movies, it's always great to surround yourself with friends because it's very hard to make a picture and a lot of things go on. There's a certain comfort in knowing you are going to work among people like Dick who understand you, who like the same things you do and who you've worked with before. So any time Dick has been able to do one of my movies, I've always tried to find a part for him – big or small – in whatever I was doing."



She's A Man-Eater: Evelyn gives Julia her undead urges for human flesh.



Digging Up The Past: *(clockwise from top left) Evelyn rises, Olivia gets to know Mike, and the bloody bus accident that kills Evelyn*



An endlessly fascinating aspect of making motion pictures for Dante is the unplanned moments of serendipitous magic that occur during shooting, which can often greatly enhance a scene. Always seeking to take advantage of these "happy accidents," he believes his films have only profited from incorporating them.

"There were some magical moments with Mushroom, the dog in *Gremlins*, who thought that all the puppets were real," offers Dante. "We also had some improv on *The 'Burbs* that was pretty inspired, and I've done numerous pictures with kids who can always provide spontaneous gold when you least expect it. There are far too many examples [of happy accidents] to recall actually, but certainly one was Corey Feldman's first scene with Gizmo in *Gremlins*. He actually made you believe the puppet was alive. Of course, he had some help from the dog!"

It's apropos that Dante should mention *Gremlins* with the recent announcement of a forthcoming third installment spotlighting the toothsome terrors. Disappointingly, he reveals he is not involved with Warner Bros.' long-mooted and "difficult" project.

"[The studio] is in the same situation with *Gremlins 3* that they found themselves in with *Gremlins 2*: they want to do a sequel – they just don't know how! I mean, they didn't even understand the first movie. Warner Bros. has been making attempts over the years to do another *Gremlins* film – whether it's a sequel or a reboot – but I don't know if anyone has discovered a satisfying reason for why they should. The problem is they don't know how to do it in a way that it was done before and that the fans will like. It's a tall order because not only is *Gremlins* now 30 years old – so is the technology that made it. When we made *Gremlins 2*, the technology had improved immensely but it was still essentially the same technology. Now puppets are out the window and everything is being done on computer, but [CGI] just wouldn't be the same."

Burying the Ex marks Dante's sixteenth feature as director (but only his third theatrical outing since 1998's *Small Soldiers*), so it's perhaps inevitable that he finds himself in reflective mood when considering his long career. Robert Altman claimed to love every movie he ever made whereas, conversely, Woody Allen stubbornly refuses to re-watch his completed films. This prompts one to enquire how Dante feels about his own work and which individual sequences he is most proud of.

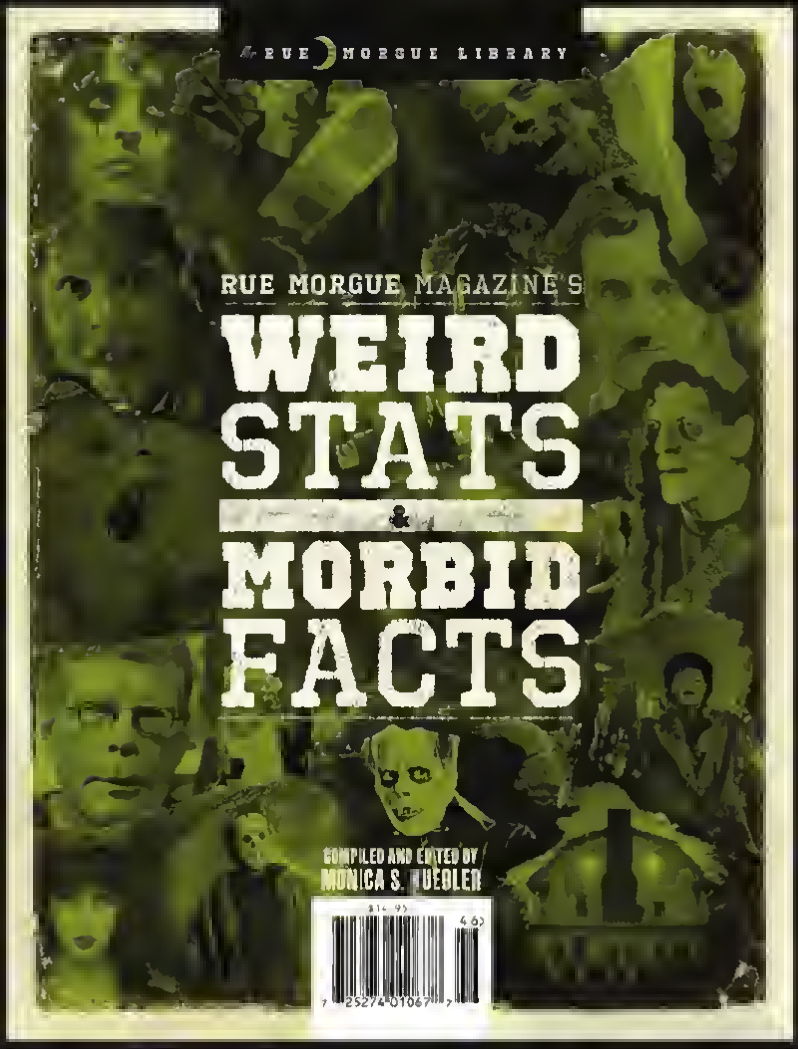
"I'm happy with my work up to a point," he confesses. "Each production has its own little triumphs and disappointments, but I think overall I've managed to imbue them with a certain personality that's discernible from film to film. Some are more endearing to me than others, but I can pretty much stand by them all. I never think of a movie in terms of set-piece sequences but as whole experiences. I suppose I should point to the piranha attacks in *Piranha*, or the movie theatre scene in *Gremlins*, or perhaps even the musical numbers in *Gremlins 2*, but they are all pretty schematic!"

At 68, Dante feels filmmaking is ultimately about surviving against seemingly insuperable odds – something he has prevailed at despite numerous struggles. After lamenting the difficulties of funding, distributing and even preserving movies in Hollywood's current climate, our conversation ends as it began – with another burning question: surely after four decades of toiling in the industry he must feel like an accomplished director? Dante chuckles humourlessly at the suggestion.

"It's funny, while working for Roger Corman you think of your own movies as being apart from the mainstream in their own little niche – not really *real movies* like everybody else makes – and I guess some of that still holds true even now. It seems like the real accomplishment these days is still being in the business."

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THE POSTER FOR RODNEY ASCHER'S *THE NIGHTMARE* IS CENTRED ON THE IMAGE OF A PILLOW, WITH GLARING RED TEXT BENEATH IT THAT READS, "WELCOME TO THE SCARIEST PLACE ON EARTH."

It's the sort of hyperbole we're used to seeing for Hollywood horror movies, but when applied to the new feature by the maker of *The Shining*-themed documentary *Room 237*, it's a simple truth. Anyone who has experienced sleep paralysis won't hesitate to tell you there is absolutely nothing more terrifying.

The nocturnal phenomenon causes the sufferer to be caught in a state between consciousness and unconsciousness, believed by some researchers to be the result of interrupted REM sleep, which is the deep sleep state during which the body induces muscle atonia (loss of strength) so you don't act out your dreams and hurt yourself. Sleep paralysis is described in Shelley R. Adler's 2011 book *Sleep Paralysis: Night-mares, Nocebos, and the Mind-Body Connection* as encompassing "... the victim's impression of wakefulness, inability to move or speak, realistic perception of the immediate environment, intense fear and anxiety, lying in the supine position, feeling pressure on the chest, difficulty breathing, and awareness of a 'presence' that is often seen or heard."



Adler notes in the book that 25 to 30 percent of people worldwide have experienced sleep paralysis, and, though it has informed art and folklore across the globe, in the US in particular "the experience is simultaneously very common and very little known." One of the reasons Ascher made *The Nightmare* is because he was astonished that more people weren't talking about a seemingly supernatural phenomenon all of humanity seems to share.

"It's one thing to say there's a state of consciousness you find yourself in that might inspire hallucinations, but to say there's a state of consciousness that inspires specific reoccurring hallucinations that happens to many different people in different parts of the world – I've never heard of this before," he explains. "No matter what could be causing that, it's very strange and powerful, very weird."

The Nightmare focuses on the experiences of eight people who suffer from RISP, or recurrent isolated sleep paralysis. (As opposed to the much more common ISP, or isolated sleep paralysis, which categorizes those who have experienced it as seldom as once). They were chosen from among thousands who answered Ascher's social media request for sufferers to contact him. He sought out people whose experiences differed or who had very similar experiences that they interpreted in different ways due to their world views. Some of the subjects interviewed consider the episodes of sleep paralysis as terrifying aspects of their everyday lives that they must live with, while some strive for deeper interpretations connected to their waking lives, and one sees the phenomenon as proof of evil forces and has turned to Christianity for protection. Ascher's own handful of experiences with the phenomenon made him understand how easy it is to ascribe deep meaning to it.

"I was pretty sceptical and pretty secular in my world view when it happened to me," he recalls. "Yet while it was happening I was completely certain that this was some sort of demonic spirit and, if that, then you know a whole world of spirituality seems very plausible."

Regardless of their religious background, all of the sufferers in *The Nightmare* describe the beings that visit them as malevolent forces. These physi

...Cont'd on p 32



ROMAIN BASSET DRAGS US INTO HIS NIGHTMARES WITH HORSEHEAD

SLUMBER THE BEAST

FABIEN LEMERCIER

CREATURES OF THE MIND – THE DARK CREATIONS BURIED DEEP IN YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS – ARE THE SCARIEST THINGS YOU CAN EVER EXPERIENCE.

Incorporating lucid dream experiments, fevered hallucinations and sleep paralysis, French director Romain Basset digs deep into the terrors of the sleeping brain with his first feature, *Horsehead*.

Lilly-Fleur Pointeaux stars as Jessica, a young woman plagued by puzzling nightmares since childhood, to the point of undergoing therapy. When her grandmother dies, she returns to the family home and the mother, Catelyn (Catriona MacColl – *The Beyond*, *House by the Cemetery*), she doesn't get along with. Jessica soon develops a fever resulting in nightmares involving her grandmother, other family members and a terrifying horse-headed creature. By employing lucid dreaming, she attempts to get to the root of it all, uncovering a dark family secret in the process. She also seeks answers from the local priest, played by French genre veteran Philippe Nahon (*High Tension*, *Irreversible*).

The beautifully shot film received rave reviews in the French press when it was released theatrically in France last March. As it arrives on DVD and Blu-ray in North America (out now in Canada from Black Fawn Distribution and in the US, from Artsploitation Films), we ask Bassett about his cinematic sojourn into the most unnerving nether regions of the subconscious.



Unlike recent visceral movies such as* Inside, *Martyrs* or *High Tension*, *Horsehead aims to be less violent and more introspective and dreamlike. Why?

I've always been obsessed by the concept of the "supreme" image of a certain mannerist cinema – British, Italian, gothic *giallos*. I grew up with powerful and stylized images which spoke to me more than the intrinsic story of a movie. In the end, it wasn't a decision, but simply what I had in the veins, in the guts… it's like an artistic gamble. In my case, it was a question of both feeling the poetic macabre that moves me and seeing if I was capable, as director, to create such images while remaining narratively viable.

Although described as a "neo-giallo," the movie seems to be more of a Baroque journey into dark romanticism.

It is completely that. Dark romanticism and symbolist art are at the origin of *Horsehead*: Gustave Moreau, Carlos Schwabe, Gaston Redon, Arnold Bocklin, Lewis Carroll… The inspirations are much more pictorial and literary than in film, however; the gothic cinema of Hammer is also vital for the atmosphere, the way it creates density in the image and its presentation of the grotesque. I am a big fan of Roy Ward Baker's *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde*.

The horse head image itself invokes John Henry Fuseli's famous painting "The Nightmare," believed to represent sleep paralysis. Why is this image so important?

This painting took a particular meaning for me when I learned it represented sleep paralysis because I was affected by these disorders at that time… In my mind, the famous pale horse of the picture is not a simple horse but rather a harmful mythological creature, like an inverted centaur. And the symbolism of the mare in dreams, for Carl Jung in particular, is also fascinating. A blind mare would represent death in utero. Horsehead is a nightmarish [creature] like *Silent Hill*'s Pyramid Head.

How did Fulci's muse, Catriona MacColl, become involved?

We met six or seven years ago at a small festival where I was showing my first short film; she was the guest of honour. [We had a] conversation that lasted several hours, and I secretly knew that one day I would shoot a full-length film with her. We never stopped talking, seeing each other, working on projects together. So, when I was writing *Horsehead*, I already had a role for her. Catriona immediately liked the challenge of representing a variety of emotions, which the performance demanded because her character exists in reality as well as in Jessica's nightmares.

With most films, the story determines the imagery, but* Horsehead *seems to be the reverse of that.

The possibility of incest and the delicious kiss between Catelyn and Jessica on a four-poster bed, Catriona MacColl's childbirth in a chapel of the 12th century, lit in twilight by the light of stained-glass windows, the dream-like underwater scenes, the presence of the she-wolf… we worked on the themes that were going to feed the movie, I would say – always guided by their visual, suggestive and sensory power. That's the essence of genre cinema to me: taking advantage of the metaphoric power of the image to awaken the senses and refresh the look.



If I Should Die Before I Wake. *A depiction of shadow men seen by one of the sleep paralysis sufferers and (top) another sleep paralysis experience re-enacted*

cal manifestations of "evil" include the aforementioned demons, as well as "shadow men," aliens, insectoid monsters and succubi or incubi.

The subjects describe their experiences on camera, in segments that are intercut with re-enactments that use actors and special effects. These sequences most often feature dark figures – sometimes with glowing red eyes or sharp teeth – that wait in the room, approach their immobile prey (often to the sound of nerve-wracking auditory hallucinations) and sometimes crawl on top of them, stopping them from breathing. It's like something right out of a horror story, which was Ascher's intent, to explore the link between sleep paralysis and culture.

"The biggest surprise was all the movie stuff where many people recognized their experience within films," he allows. "Interesting questions started to spring forward from there. It's a chicken and egg thing, like, are icons of horror inspired by the creators who have had this experience, or do they influence the experience of people who have sleep paralysis? This part of the shadow history we have in horror going back into *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* and beyond – the succubus, the vampire, ... I heard that Mary Shelley had experienced sleep paralysis or something like it the night before writing *Frankenstein*. There are passages of *Dracula* that are an awful lot like it."

There are plenty of examples of genre art influenced by sleep paralysis, both before and after Shelley's 1818 novel. The 2013 movie *Shadow People*, for example, is about a radio DJ who investigates the death of a caller who succumbs to Sudden Unexpected Nocturnal Death Syndrome (SUNDS), and discovers supernatural demons that paralyze and murder people while they sleep. SUNDS is an actual medical phenomenon first reported in 1977 when Hmong refugees living in different parts of the US died inexplicably in their sleep. The deaths were linked to sleep paralysis and news reports on the incidents influenced Wes Craven to write *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Less well-known is the 1986 Ken Russell movie *Gothic*, which is set the night that Shelley dreamed up the idea for *Frankenstein*; both its story and poster reference the 1781 Henry Fusch painting The Nightmare (see RM#110), which Ascher's film is named after. The painting, which depicts a pale woman sleeping with a small demon creature on her chest, while a horse's head with white eyes pokes out from behind red curtains, is the most famous image related to sleep paralysis (and the inspiration for the new film *Horsehead* – see sidebar). There are dozens of other paintings and sculptures that depict similar nocturnal scenarios. Sleep paralysis casts a very long shadow over history and religion, as well.

"There was a suggestion that the Salem witch trials and the experience of the people that encountered witches might have been actually suffering from sleep paralysis," Ascher points out, noting information in Adler's book.

He adds, "There is this one [mention] I came across, somebody was suggesting that Jakob wrestling with the Angel in the Bible, sounded like a sleep paralysis experience so... older more primal views of spirituality are linked up to this experience."

The Nightmare illustrates that sleep paralysis is a shared phenomenon throughout history that both feeds and feeds off our existing fears and their cultural biases.

"The big thing is there is a connection in it with horror movies, in particular supernatural horror movies," reiterates Ascher. "There's a stronger connection to the experience of millions of people that I certainly thought was there before I started the project. I don't think it's a big surprise that the horror in our dream lives is very closely related [to our art], in that each one kind of effects the other, but for many people it goes beyond just a dream experience to something that feels much, much more real."

More terrifying than the existence of such a widespread phenomenon, however, is that – as *The Nightmare* suggests – just reading about sleep paralysis or watching footage about it can actually trigger it. Ascher knows this first hand.

"It did happen once in the course of making the film," he admits. "And this one was surprising, I had never really seen that film *Communion*, but one of our [interview subjects] talks about it – the Christopher Walken movie with an alien abduction. It made a really big impact on him that we talked to, so I rented it and I was watching it. I didn't start it until midnight so it was two or three in the morning before I went to bed and as I went to sleep I felt like my body was not freezing so much as being kind of caught in the net like a drawstring that was pulling me into a ball. As that happened, I heard a sort of turbine start to whirr up and I saw sort of an electric neon kind of kaleidoscope, and so help me god – [laughs] – I saw, like, the faces of space aliens inside of it."

EVIL IN EVERY WAY.



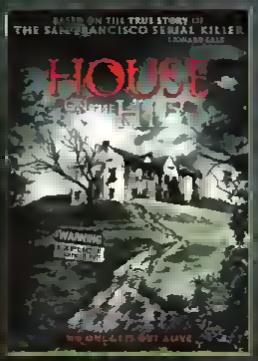
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DEATH VALLEY HIGH

AS SEEN ON TOUR *WITH*
MINDLESS SELF *INDULGENCE*,
††† *[CROSSES]*,
ORGY

DUEL
DIGITAL *EP*
OUT THIS JUNE
INCLUDING *COVERS OF*
FAITH NO *MORE*
METAL*LICA*
CHRIST*IAN DEATH*
EURYTHMICS
BANANA*RAMA*

DEATH VALLEY HIGH
DUEL

with GUEST APPEARANCES *FROM*
CHINO *MORENO*
DEFTONES ††† *[CROSSES]*
MARK *OSEGUEDA*
DEATH *ANGEL*
CHRIS *CONNELLY*
MINISTRY REVCO PIGFACE
HANIN *ELIAS*
ATARI TEENAGE RIOT PANTOME
RYKARDA *PARASOL*

DUEL

MINUS HEAD RECORDS

WITH *STANLEY KUBRICK'S THE SHINING: STUDIES IN THE HORROR FILM*, DANEL OLSON TAKES US BACK TO THE MOVIE THAT NEVER LEFT OUR NIGHTMARES

OVERLOOK'D NO MORE

ANDREA SUBISSATI



MOVIES ARE LIKE PEOPLE; SOME SHINE AND SOME DON'T.

The merging of one of cinema's foremost auteurs, Stanley Kubrick, with a best-selling horror novel by Stephen King, 1980's *The Shining* was snubbed by the Academy and bashed by reviewers upon its release but nevertheless remains one of the most enduring genre films of all time. Yet, despite its devoted fan base, much of the film has remained shrouded in mystery... until now. *Stanley Kubrick's The Shining, Studies in the Horror Film*, out now from Centipede Press, makes full use of its 752 pages to cover everything fans of the film ever wanted to know. The hefty tome is packed with academic essays, as well as new and classic interviews with the movie's cast and crew, including the elusive Kubrick himself.

It's the latest of Centipede's *Studies in the Horror Film* series, which has covered similar haunted ground with books on *Nosferatu*, *Night of the Living Dead* and *The Exorcist*. Editor Danel Olson feels Kubrick's film was long overdue for inclusion in the series.

"The recent 35th reunion of cast and crew put on in London by Howard Berry and The Elstree Project – called 'Forever and Ever' – quickly sold out. [and] the major players in the movie have entered the popular consciousness – as seen by their appearance in endless media forms. However, when it comes to academic registers, the film is still underrepresented."

It's an oversight that Olson's book remedies with aplomb. Following the heartfelt foreword from Oscar-winning Pixar filmmaker Lee Unkrich (who moonlights as "caretaker" for the excellent online *Shining* archive, theoverlookhotel.com), John Baxter's essay "Kubrick in Hell" sets the stage with a comprehensive overview of the film's many trials, tribulations and triumphs from concept to production. Subsequent essays include a thematic analysis ("The Overlook Hotel," which contains insight into the family as the central site of the film's horror), and "Sutured Time," which takes a revelatory look at why the film's mysteries seem to deepen with age.

"As with *The Exorcist: Studies in the Horror Film*, I thought new insights and unpredictable approaches would arise by attracting the widest spectrum of specialists," says Olson of assembling his team of academic contributors. "So I read articles by filmmakers, documentarians, scientists, philosophers, film critics, genre and Stephen King scholars, creative writers, musicologists, Native American culture preservers and literary critics. I found those that I thought the most illuminating. Then I asked them to imaginatively enter The Overlook and tell us what they found there."

Part of *The Shining*'s intrigue lies in the fact that its eccentric director desired that it be mysterious. Stanley Kubrick was reluctant to give interviews in spite of the great media interest in the film. Olson's book confirms many long-standing *Shining* rumours – Kubrick's obsessive, pernickety perfectionism such as requiring that Jack Nicholson do 28 takes of the shot where he hand is shown removing the vacuum tube from The Overlook's radio, for example, and terse, creative differences with Stephen King – but it also illuminates interesting facts that have only come to light through this publication, including that Jane Fonda was originally considered for the role of Wendy Torrance and co-screenwriter Diana Johnson wanted to bring a feminist bent to the character.



Cast interviews include the expected heavies (Jack Nicholson, the late Scatman Crothers and a rare, exclusive chat with Shelley Duvall) but also Lia Beldam (the woman in room 237's bathtub) and Robin Pappas, who played a nurse in a deleted alternate ending that was only ever shown in the initial US release. Olson's tome also contains unpublished interviews with key crew members, such as Kubrick's personal assistant Leon Vitali and Garrett Brown, who operated his own innovative Steadicam in the film. In addition to these details, the book boasts incredible alternative poster artwork.

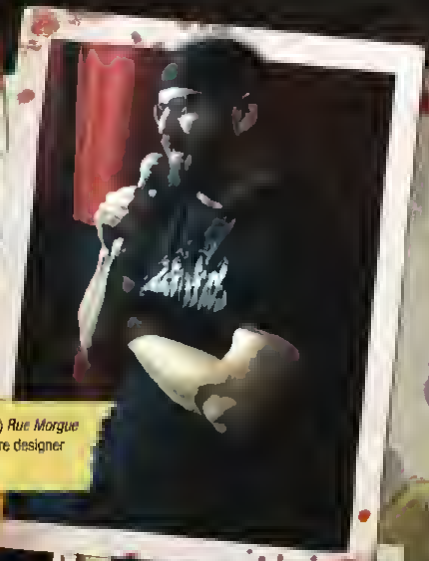
"The art that *The Shining* has inspired shows the truest love, rapture, and even a winking humour to the horror," says Olson, who plumbed the depths of the Internet and Unkrich's aforementioned website for pieces from artists such as Ben Whitesell, Jason Heatherly and Brandon Schaefer.

So why has the film spent so many years in shadow? Olson attributes *The Shining*'s lack of proper recognition to several factors, including the fact that horror movies in general tend to be, ahem, *overlooked*.

He wonders, "Could any *Rue Morgue* readers suggest why some auteur films get scholarly treatments constantly – Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* comes to mind – while other auteurs' works, like *The Shining*, which exploded the hoary ways of horror, get so few?"

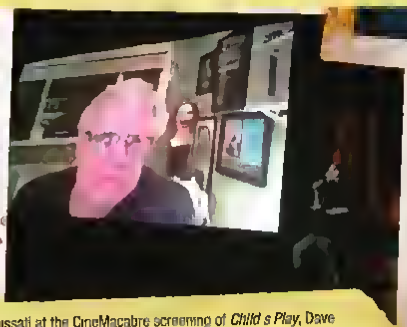
MEMENTO MORGUE





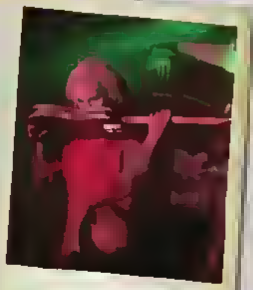
Mad Max: Fury Road director George Miller at the film's Toronto premiere, with (L to R) *Rue Morgue* Editor-in-Chief Dave Alexander, *RM*'s Tal Zimerman and Gary Pullin, and (right) creature designer and producer Alex Pardee at the CineMacabre premiere of *Digging Up the Marrow*







(L to R) Dave and *RM*'s Andrea Subissati at the CineMacabre screening of *Child's Play*, Dave interviews director Tom Holland via Skype, and some special guests at the CineMacabre screening of *Lost Soul: The Doomed Journey of Richard Stanley's Island of Dr. Moreau*





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(Left) John 5 at Detroit's Token Lounge, and (L to R) *RM*'s Vanessa Furtado, *Hannibal* creator Bryan Fuller, Monica S. Kuebler and Dave at the *Hannibal* production offices

CINEMACABRE

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APOCALYPSE WOW!

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD

Starring Tom Hardy, Charlize Theron and Nicholas Hoult
Directed by George Miller
Written by George Miller, Brendan McCarthy and Nick Lathouris
Warner Bros

"My name is Max. My world is fire. And blood." And mutants.

Everything in the *Mad Max* universe has mutated for *Mad Max: Fury Road*. The humans are more physically grotesque, humanity has reached new levels of cruelty, highway war machines have morphed into fire-breathing monsters, and the infernal landscape is inflated by impossibly huge sandstorms and fiery tornados. Behind it all is George Miller – the 70-year-old writer/director/producer of the original *Mad Max* trilogy – who's even remade himself, from the guy whose last three films starred talking animals, to the creator of the best, darkest, modern action movie in years.



With a $150 million budget (the original 1979 *Mad Max* was made for $400,000), Miller and co-writers Brendan McCarthy and Nick Lathouris have re-imagined the post-nuclear apocalypse world we last saw 30 years ago in *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* as something so epic, it's like *Lord of the Rings* for horror fans. (Or at the very least, *Lord of the Flies* on irradiated steroids.)

Tom Hardy (*The Dark Knight Rises*) is Max Rotansky, a drifter captured and brought to an industrial cave city lorded over by Imortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne, who played gang leader Toecutter in *Mad Max*), a terrifying Jabba-the-Hutt-meets-Caligula dictator. Here, Max becomes a shackled "blood bag" for Nux (Nicholas Hoult: Beast in the *X-Men* movies), one of Joe's painted "war boys" who gets high by blood doping. When one of Joe's top warriors, Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron, beyond badass sporting a robotic arm), steals a tanker truck full of precious cargo, Joe gives chase. Max escapes and joins forces with her to make a run for a Promised Land. The only things standing in their way – aside from Joe's armada of custom vehicles equipped with everything from heavy machine guns to an electric guitar flame-thrower – is a nearly impassable road, other murderous tribes and the distrust between each other.

So... pretty much everything, which leads to eruptions of high-speed violence that suggest the film's real stars are the stuntmen rag-dolling across the screen – sometimes so many in a single sequence that you can barely keep track of the action. Junkie XL's thunderous score and stunning cinematography by John Searle (*The Hitcher, Dreamcatcher*) only add nitro to this sensory overload.

Fury Road surpasses the promise of its explosive trailers. It's a technical, artistic and dramatic masterwork full of surprises (who expected it to be a feminist film?) with enough gristle in the gears to make any genre fan's blood run hot.

DAVE ALEXANDER

CLEANING HOUSE

POLTERGEIST

Starring Sam Rockwell, Rosemarie DeWitt and Kennedi Clements
Directed by Gil Kenan
Written by David Lindsay-Abaire
Fox

Going to a horror remake is too often like buying a haunted house in a movie: the warning signs were there but you ignored them and paid for the damn thing anyhow – now you're living in a world of cheap scares and regret.

Well, no seasoned horror fan had high hopes for the *Poltergeist* remake. It's as unnecessary as they come, the trailer is lame and it's produced by Sam Raimi and Rob Tapert's Ghost-house Pictures, whose uneven output runs from solid (*30 Days of Night*) to crappy cash cow (*The*

Grudge 3), and inevitably includes a lot of jump-scares and overused CGI.

As far as the plot of their *Poltergeist* remake goes, it's nothing new: a family with three kids moves into a suburban house built on an ancient graveyard, paranormal disturbances ensue, the youngest daughter says "They're here" before getting ghostnapped, homeowners find an eccentric paranormal expert to extract her through a ectoplasmic butthole in the ceiling, and said spirits ruin all resale value. Because it's 2015 and not 1982, we get some scares involving cell-phones, a remote control drone capturing ghost footage, and instead of badass Zelda Rubenstein as the medium Tangina, we get a reality show ghost-hunter guy (Jared Harris) trying to clean the house.



Director Gil Kenan (*Monster House*) and screenwriter David Lindsay-Abaire (*Rise of the Guardians*) keep things very PG-13, which is just fine given the glut of nastier ghost and possession movies out there right now. Some of the scares even work pretty well, including that goddamn creepy clown. Plus, the ghost dimension has a surprisingly surreal Lucio Fulci movie look to it.

But none of that makes up for the rushed plotting, bad dialogue and weak characters. Eric and Amy Bowen (smirky Sam Rockwell and Saltine-boring Rosemarie DeWitt) are easily the worst parents this side of *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*. They constantly put their kids in danger, don't seem too worried when one of them is, say, attacked by evil tree, and when another one disappears altogether they don't think calling the police is an option – *and everyone else is okay with this!*

On second thought, perhaps directing a horror remake is like buying a haunted house. All the warning signs were there in the bad script, but you walked into it anyway.

DAVE ALEXANDER

BEST OF GHOST WORLDS

WE ARE STILL HERE

Starring Barbara Crampton, Andrew Sensenig and Lisa Marie
Written and directed by Ted Geoghegan
Dark Sky Films

Who decided ghost stories have to be all atmosphere and no action? Don't get me wrong, I love slow-burning haunters such as Ti West's *The Innkeepers* and Alejandro Amenabar's *The Others*, however, Ted Geoghegan's *We Are Still Here* shows it's possible to have both a crushing sense of dread and buckets of blood in the same cohesive film.



The movie begins with Anne and Paul (Barbara Crampton and Andrew Sensenig), an older couple that moves to a remote farmhouse in a traditionally tiny New England town. After the death of their adult son, they're starting fresh, away from everything that reminds them of their loss. The house's quirks are matched by the odd locals, which prompt Anne to invite her hippie friends May and Jacob (Lisa Marie and Larry Fessenden) over to contact any possible spirits. By the time they realize they're paranormally in over their heads, it's too late.



We Are Still Here does a great job of instilling a sense of impending doom through creepy visuals and editing, but it does an even better job of unleashing all hell upon the house and its residents. The ghosts, and certain humans, are ferocious and the blood flows heartily as the film coasts into its third act. It's refreshing to see a ghost story where really bad things actually happen to the characters, rather than just a premonition of terror you get sloppy, vicious violence.

Wearing its love of classic horror on its sleeve, *We Are Still Here* tips its hat to films such as *The Wicker Man*, *House by the Cemetery* and *The Exorcist*. Nothing onscreen is wholly original or inventive, but the assembly of acknowledgments still works, making *We Are Still Here* feel more like a scavenger hunt for grown-up monster kids than a random grab bag of unrelated references.

Ultimately, it's a profusely bleeding celebration of good old-fashioned horror.

DEIRDRE CRIMMINS

KATIE SNAPS

88

Starring Katharine Isabelle, Christopher Lloyd and Michael Ironside
Directed by April Mullen
Written by Tim Doiron
ANConnect

Canuck director April Mullen's fourth feature has so much going for it – it looks fantastic, boasts a fun, unhinged lead performance by Katharine Isabelle, and it flips B-movie gender conventions in satisfying ways. Ultimately, though, it spends more time ticking off grindhouse checkboxes than telling its own story, and that emphasis on homage over originality is disappointing.

Isabelle stars as Gwen, a young woman so traumatized by the death of her beau she's entered a fugue state – which, as an opening title card tells us, is a rare, amnesia-like disorder usually marked by "the establishment of a new persona... and often involves visual and auditory hallucinations." Gwen, a strip-club bartender, is a mess from the moment we meet her, and *88* interweaves a pair of fractured timelines to show us how she got that way: her impossibly dreamy boyfriend (Kyle Schmid) has been reduced to a bloody smear on their apartment floor, and Gwen's boss, Cyrus (a scenery-chomping Christopher Lloyd), is to blame. The story picks up in the middle of Gwen's psychotic break, which leaves a trail of corpses strewn throughout *88*'s appealingly seedy world of motels, bowling alleys and titty bars.

If you can't guess all of the film's twists within the first five minutes, I'm envious of your blissful naiveté. There are things I loved about *88*, including its premise: it's a violent revenge flick that doesn't resort to sexual brutalization to motivate its main character, and it doesn't mind relegating boys to the role of zany sidekick or angelic lover. Unfortunately, it all feels too shallow and familiar, and there aren't any surprises along the way. Mullen, who also helmed 2012's *Dead Before Dawn 3D*, is a talented filmmaker, and *88* proves her to be a canny, gifted widescreen stylist with a hell of an eye for detail. It's too bad it also finds her putting more energy into





OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE FREAKS ON FANGERS

COFFIN UP A STORM



AEON: THE LAST VAMPIRE ON EARTH

Chemical Burn Entertainment

It's been a while since I reviewed any vampire movies, so I dove into the delete bin and got an instant shame-boner from the cover of this DVD, which depicts a fleet of flying saucers laying waste to a city. Unfortunately, there isn't a single UFO in the film, which follows a girl trapped in an underground storage facility with the decaying remains of an ancient vampire, while an unspecified calamity rumbles outside. Too weak to eat her, he spends his time horking up green shit while expounding upon the tragedy of humanity. It might have worked if the director had cut the coughing and chit-chat and focused more on the claustrophobic surroundings. Only watch it if it's the last film on Earth!

BODY COUNT: 2

BEST VAMPIRE DEATH: Slowly starving to death

BLACK AND WHITE AND SED ALL OVER



SANGUIVOROUS

MVD Visual

When the girl in this avant-garde Japanese movie discovers she's becoming a vampire due to a family curse, she's must decide to either find a way to stop it or embrace the primal feelings that are quickly sweeping over her. Playing out like a first-year film student's year-end project, the director's use of grainy black and white film stock is nice, but the vamps' horrible fake fangs and his choice to suddenly stop using spoken dialogue and revert to title cards is annoying, especially when paired with a jarring piano score. If you're still intent on watching it, at least try to see it in an art gallery with some wine and cheese rather than your basement with a beer and a bowl of Cheetos.

BODY COUNT: 4

BEST VAMPIRE DEATH: Self-decapitation with a guillotine

HAULIN' ASS



BITE MARKS

Breaking Glass Pictures

I'm always amazed that there are so few gay horror movies. So when I heard this film was not only overtly gay but also about vampires, I snapped it up faster than a drag queen at a sequin sale. The film follows Brewster, a trucker hauling caskets who gets more than he bargained for after picking up two gay hitchhikers. He has an affair with one of them before the truck breaks down and the trio is attacked by beefcake baddies with abs almost as sharp as their fangs. *Bite Marks* is competently shot with some good gore effects and a witty script, plus there's a cool cameo by Stephen Geoffreys, who played Evil Ed in the original *Fright Night*. There *is* such a thing as vampires, Brewster!

BODY COUNT: 8

BEST VAMPIRE DEATH: Hit by lightning

LAST CHANCE LANCE

channelling other directors than finding her own voice. Once she corrects that course, I have a feeling that Mullen, like *88*'s deadly heroine, will be a force to be reckoned with.

APRIL SNELLINGS

HARD TO WASH OFF

MUCK

Starring Lachlan Buchanan, Puja Mohindra and Bryce Draper
Written and directed by Steve Wolsh
Anchor Bay

What do you get when you mix a pack of unlikable youths, a thin plot and gratuitous nudity? Well, about a zillion terrible horror movies. Add to them *Muck*, Steve Wolsh's embarrassing directorial debut. The micro-budget film premiered at the Playboy Mansion last February and counts 2012 Playmate of the Year Jaclyn Swedberg and YouTube personality Lauren Francesca among its cast members. But wait, it gets better. *Muck* is just the start of a planned trilogy, and the prequel *Muck. Feast of St Patrick* was successfully crowdfunded before *Muck* even came out. Sound like a recipe for cinematic greatness? Read on...

The film opens with a group of friends in a swamp who have narrowly escaped an unnamed terrifying encounter. One of them is wounded, another is completely naked (because, boobs) and they're all extremely irritating. After a seemingly endless argument about what to do next, they decide to take refuge in a house that appears to be empty, but the evil they've escaped (a pack of oversized homicidal albinos, including one played by Kane Hodder) has followed them and proceeds to pick them off one by one. One of the group, Noah (Bryce Draper) manages to call up his bro buddy Troit (Lachlan Buchanan), for help. Troit is out celebrating St Patrick's Day at a bar, as bros do, but he's just drunk enough to jump into his car and take the two girls he's partying with out to the town of West Craven (wow, subtle) to help. His car gets attacked, so the gang must traverse the swamp (again) and survive yet another showdown with the albinos on 'roids.



Wolsh is apparently educated in marketing and management, rather than film and holy muck, it shows. The movie is a perfect example of the dark side of crowdfunding, a popularity contest where promotional partnerships with multibillion dollar companies (like, say, Playboy) can make amateur filmmakers realize their terrible wet dreams.

It's 2015, so if it's silicone boobies you're after, there are pornos and a Tommy Wiseau movie out there with better plots and performances. Steer clear of this 90-minute mess.

ANDREA SUBISSATI

WHEN THE MAKERS OF *SPRING* SET OUT TO WRITE A LOVE STORY SET IN COASTAL ITALY, THEY KNEW IT NEEDED THE KIND OF MONSTER "CTHULHU COULD LOVE"

LOVE... LOVECRAFT-STYLE

SEAN PLUMMER



JUSTIN BENSON HAS NOTHING AGAINST VAMPIRES. IN FACT, THE CREATURE HE AND HIS CO-DIRECTOR AARON MOORHEAD CREATED FOR THEIR BODY HORROR LOVE STORY *SPRING* SHARES ELEMENTS WITH THE CLASSIC BLOODSUCKER, IN ADDITION TO A NUMBER OF OTHER MYTHOLOGICAL BEASTIES.

He just disputes the evolutionary basis of their immortality.

"In vampire mythology, vampires drink blood to remain immortal, and that's not scientifically sound," he says. "But ours is."

"Ours is *totally* scientifically sound," adds Moorhead, both filmmakers bursting out in laughter.

Rue Morgue spoke to the producer-director team on the day of *Spring*'s world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) last fall. The follow-up to their innovative cabin-in-the-woods film *Resolution* (2012) casts German actress Nadia Hilker as Louise, a student in a seaside Italian village who crosses paths with Evan (*Evil Dead*'s Lou Taylor-Pucci), a young American who has fled the States in the wake of his mother's death. Sparks fly and the aggressive Louise tries to bed the young tourist right away. But Evan, sensing this could be more than a fling, resists. Soon enough he discovers the reason for her urgency: she is a monster that needs his help to complete her latest transformation.



Benson wrote *Spring* during post-production on *Resolution*. The ambiguous ending of that film, in which two friends are manipulated by an unseen force, left some wondering exactly what happened. Inadvertently, attempts to explain the unexplainable inspired *Spring*.

Says Benson: "It really pointed out that audiences, when they watch a film that falls into a category – let's call them 'scary films' – have a very quick expectation for [guessing the monster] to be one of half a dozen things. And in writing *Spring*, it was about playing with those expectations and toying with these red herrings. You can show someone who's pale and skinny and it's a vampire. So that's part of the transformation. You can show a claw growing and it's a werewolf. And as you go through the movie you have all these red herrings and you manipulate the audience as to what kind of monster it is and then ultimately have them guess one of those half-dozen things. It made us think, 'Wait a second. How about we invent a new one?'"

To inspire the look of the Louise monster, which features fur, claws, scales and fangs in various combinations, Moorhead and Benson tasked the creature designers at MASTERSFX (*Slither*, *Underworld: Awakening*) with creating something not completely alien.

"The general thesis was to keep it based in nature, and ideally in human evolution: mangy primates, albino alligators, diseased pigeons," says Moorehead.

"You know how [the xenomorph from] *Alien* is the best creature of all time?" asks Benson. "I don't think anyone disputes that. And what is it that makes it so strong? One of the theories is because it looks nature-based, it looks like something parasitic and sexual. So that's the thing about the monster in our movie: she's extremely nature-based."

Spring's creature design is not the film's only innovation. Critics have cited its bold use of horror elements in service to Louise and Evan's love story. That means blood is spilled and bodies change shape but in between lengthy dialogue scenes about the nature of love. Indeed, TIFF's programme notes describe *Spring* "*Before Sunrise* with a supernatural twist," referencing Richard Linklater's 1995 romance film, also centred on two lovers.

"I grew up in Southern California around a lot of counterculture," says Benson. "So I didn't see a lot of films that people see in their youth, like *Star Wars*, but I saw [Kevin Smith's] *Chasing Amy* like twelve times on VHS so I'm kind of strangely programmed to write very naturalistic, funny dialogue. Not that it comes easy, but I don't know how to do it any other way. [I've] kind of been programmed by '90s indie films."

With its love story and creature moments, *Spring*, on its face, sounds like the perfect first date movie.

"We never thought it would be but it is," says Benson. "It truly is."

Adds Moorhead: "One reviewer said not only is it a 'chick flick' but it's a 'dick flick.'"

Benson corrects him. "No, he said it was a chick flick that Cthulhu could love."

REISSUES



UDO KNOW THE REAL ME

THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MISS OSBOURNE (1981) Blu-ray

Starring Udo Kier, Marina Pierro and Gérard Zalcberg
Written and directed by Walerian Borowczyk
Arrow Films

Udo Kier is best known to classic monster fans for his roles in the Andy Warhol-produced gems *Flesh for Frankenstein* (1973) and *Blood for Dracula* (1974), but he also played Dr Jekyll. In 1981 he followed in the footsteps of John Barrymore, Fredric March and Spencer Tracy when he took on Robert Louis Stevenson's doomed scientist in Walerian Borowczyk's comic-surrealist slasher, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Miss Osbourne*.



It's easy to see why both the cult actor and the iconic novella appealed to the Polish director, who also made *The Beast* and *Immoral Tales*, for there's a delightful and ironic perversity in an upper-class Victorian gentlemen giving free reign to his darkest sexual urges.

The film takes place around a party celebrating Jekyll's engagement to Fanny Osbourne (Marina Pierro). When one of his well-heeled guests informs the Doctor that a child was murdered in the streets outside, it leads to him taking a chemical bath and transforming into Hyde (Gérard Zalcberg). An orgy of rape, torture and savage killing ensues – with Fanny eventually following his lead, soon both are revelling in freedom from civilized society.

While there is tremendous visual poetry in the deliberately flat-looking sets and murky blue-hued cinematography, the silly performances, even sillier sex scenes and Old Dark House plotting edge the movie into camp territory. So, while *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Miss Osbourne* is by no means a great variation on the slasher movie, it is a fascinating one ruled by rabid desire, deranged passion and monstrous bloodlust.

Boasting a stupendous 2K digital restoration scanned from the original camera negative (a project overseen by cinematographer Noel Véry), the region 1 & 2 Arrow disc is crammed with an abundance of excellent bonus material: a commentary track, interview featurettes, short films and accompanying booklet featuring new writing by Borowczyk expert Daniel Bird.

Another triumph is the electronic score by Bernard Parmegiani. The dissonant soundscapes complement the erotic-horror imagery in a way that should, in theory, be quite jarring. But thanks to Borowczyk's mastery of the medium, it works rather well towards what was always a smutty remit: recreating the atmosphere of a wet dream.

MARTYN CONTERIO

MOVE OVER, HADDONFIELD...

FROM A WHISPER TO A SCREAM (1987) Blu-ray

Starring Vincent Price, Clu Gulager and Terry Kiser
Directed by Jeff Burr
Written by C. Courtney Joyner, Darin Scott and Jeff Burr
Scream Factory

The horror anthology film, which flourished in the 1960s and '70s, was on its deathbed by the late 1980s. One of only a few such flicks to come out during this period was 1987's *From a Whisper to a Scream* (a.k.a. *The Offspring*), now available on Blu-ray from Scream Factory.



In the town of Oldfield, Tennessee, local historian Julian White (Vincent Price) is visited by reporter Beth Chandler (Susan Tyrrell), who has witnessed the execution of White's murderous niece, Katherine (Hammer starlet Martine Beswick) in prison earlier that day. White explains that his niece was compelled to kill because of an evil force corrupting Oldfield and its citizens. To prove his theory, White provides four accounts from Oldfield's history in which the townsfolk become embroiled in murder, torture, necrophilia and more.

In the first tale, bespectacled, mild-mannered Stanley Burnside (Clu Gulager, *Return of the Living Dead*) takes care of his adult sister and dreams of dating his attractive supervisor from work. She reluctantly agrees to go out with him, but his affections turn to murder... and more.

In the next entry, criminal Jesse Hardwick (Terry Kiser) is shot by gangsters and left for dead but is saved by an old recluse. When Hardwick learns the man may be much older than he seems, he sets out to discover the hermit's secret, with horrific results.

The third story has a young woman in love with the handsome glass-and-metal-eating performer from a Depression-era travelling circus. But the young couple's attempt at courtship is halted by the actions of the jealous circus owner, Snakewoman (Rosalind Cash, *The Omega Man*).

In the final tale, a trio of Union soldiers in the American Civil War, led by the ruthless Sgt. Gallen (Cameron Mitchell, *Blood and Black*

Lace), attempts to plunder a farmhouse, but soon realize it is occupied by a group of resourceful, armed children.

Those expecting the old-fashioned chills of Price's earlier films may be surprised by *From a Whisper to a Scream*, which opts for a liberal dose of gore, nudity and a few truly cringe-inducing moments that will stick with viewers for days. Extras include commentaries with director Jeff Burr (*Stepfather II*, *Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III*) and writers C. Courtney Joyner and Darin Scott, an entertaining making-of documentary and more. *From a Whisper to a Scream* might be a movie out of time, but it works as well today as it did in '87.

JAMES BURRELL

AGAR THE HORRIBLE

HAND OF DEATH (1962) DVD

Starring John Agar, Paula Raymond and Steve Dunne
Directed by Gene Nelson
Written by Eugene Ling
Fox

In the pantheon of great classic horror film actors, John Agar ranks somewhere near the very bottom, below guys like John Carradine and Tor Johnson. *Hand of Death*, which cast the then-troubled star as a death-dealing mutant, is a film that seems light years away from even the second-string 1950s Universal programmers he once starred in, such as *Revenge of the Creature* and *The Mole People*. It's from a time when Agar's name on the marquee was always a pretty good indicator of a cheapjack production, which is why you shouldn't expect much from this little-seen body horror curio recently released as part of Fox's MOD line of DVDs.



The set-up is simple: government scientist Dr. Marsh (Agar) is developing a paralyzing nerve gas he believes will end the need for nuclear wars. Things are looking up for Marsh – he's on the verge of a major scientific breakthrough and making plans to marry the boss' secretary (Paula Raymond), but a lab accident exposes him to dangerous chemicals. Marsh realizes something may be amiss when he pats his assistant on the arm and the man suddenly drops dead, but it gets much worse when his body begins to transform into a grotesque, craggy mess. He then mostly drives around LA, touching people to death.

With a palpable poverty row atmosphere and a running time just south of 60 minutes, *Hand of Death* is not much more than a cheap, dumb horror film, but it does have a few things going for it. Aside from a fairly original musical score, with a thick layer of jazzy bongos that occasionally give way to screeching Theremin stings, the monster itself is unlike most movie menaces at the time. Created by makeup pro Bob Mark (who went on to TV's *Lost in Space*), Marsh's mutant appearance is imposing, with tough, stone-like skin, thick features and bulky, oversized appendages. Apparently, that's really Agar stumbling around under all that makeup, but it's impossible to recognize him as he blindly grunts and flails around the film's budget-conscious sets.

From those scenes alone it's obvious Agar was no Karloff and, likewise, *Hand of Death* is certainly no *Frankenstein*. Undemanding viewers whose tastes tend towards lowbrow will find a few delights, while others may suspect they've hit the genre's rock bottom.

PAUL CORUPE



THE TOXIC 2s

CLASS OF NUKE 'EM HIGH 2: SUBHUMANOID MELTDOWN (1991) Blu-ray

Starring Brick Bronsky, Lisa Gaye and Leesa Rowland
Directed by Eric Louzil and Donald G. Jackson
Written by Lloyd Kaufman, Carl Morano, Matt Unger, et al
Troma

Back in 1986, Lloyd Kaufman and his Troma team followed up the colossal success of *The Toxic Avenger* with a crazy-ass sci-fi-horror, comedy romp about a high school that gets contaminated by the toxic waste from a nearby nuclear reactor. It was called *Class of Nuke 'Em High* and quickly became a huge money-maker for them, which meant some kind of squishy sequel would most likely be hot on its heels.



But fans would have to wait until 1991, as Troma suffered a staggering financial crisis and had to reinvent itself from the ground up. The sequel that eventually followed was set in the newly built Tromaville Institute of Technology (T.I.T.), where an intrepid reporter discovers secret toxic experiments are being carried out on the student population by the staff of the new nuclear power plant.

Deciding not to use any of the original cast and to move production from New York to LA, director Eric Louzil seemed fixated on creating his own brand of slapstick comedy filled with heaps of scantily-clad actresses, dubbed over dialogue and almost no adherence to a logical, linear script. In fact, there are many instances where the movie is incoherent and practically unwatchable as the exaggerated costumes, voices, hairdos and gore assault your senses to the point of overload.

This Blu-ray presentation definitely brightens the murky colours seen on previous releases, but the scratches and flickers remain. Also included are a number of Tromatic extras, among them a couple of music videos and some cool interviews with actress Lisa Gaye and Troma alumnus James Gunn (*Guardians of the Galaxy*). But conspicuously absent are its theatrical trailers and Uncle Lloyd on the commentary track.

At the end of the day, *Class of Nuke 'Em High 2* is still classic Troma for those who like their horror cheese nice and stinky. But for anyone else, only watch it if you want to witness the kind of messy, rambunctious rant of film that's like a regular B-movie with ADD.

LAST CHANCE LANCE



It! The Terror From Beyond Space

MARTIAN MAN-HUNTER

IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE (1958) Blu-ray

Starring Marshall Thompson, Shirley Patterson and Kim Spalding
Directed by Edward L. Cahn
Written by Jerome Bixby
Olive Films

Accused of murdering his entire astronaut crew in order to hoard rations after a crash landing, Mars explorer Col. Edward Carruthers (Marshall Thompson) is being taken back to Earth by a rescue ship to await trial. Carruthers insists a Martian menace offed his shipmates, and sure enough, the creature has stowed away on the rocket returning home, lurking in air shafts and supping on the rescue crew.

You wouldn't be alone in thinking that Dan O'Bannon used this ship-under-siege plot when concocting the story for *Alien*. The 1979 upgrade features the ultimate predator, ratcheting up the tension because we never know how and when it will strike. However, unlike *Alien*, *It's* is trapped in one central location for a hefty chunk of the movie, robbing the proceedings of much suspense.

The characters here are essentially ciphers, whh only Thompson and the fetching Shirley Patterson, as rescue crew member Ann Anderson, making notable impressions. Ultimately, a movie like this has to be partially evaluated on the quality of its monster, and *It!* has always looked good as a still in monster movie books, especially rendered in high contrast, low-key lighting. Director Edward Cahn manages a few atmospheric shots in which the hulking, toothy, three-fingered beast is concealed in shadows or silhouetted. But too much screen time is devoted to the monster, and more traditionally lit shots reveal actor Roy Corrigan lumbering about in the cumbersome monster suit, obviously having trouble seeing where he's going – not that this detracts from the film's campy entertainment value.



It! succeeds mostly as an entertaining 69-minute curio of the era, set in the "future" of 1973 where all gauges are in analog and the film's female crew members are essentially caregivers and waitresses. Best of all are the baffling ways the crew members attempt to destroy the creature aboard their vessel: with handguns and grenades! Plus, any movie in which a monster gets an exclamation in the title is worth something.

For a nearly 60-year-old film, the transfer is passable, although the quality varies between crisp shots and blurry ones – but who knows what shape the surviving elements were in. This creature feature is a step above some '50s fare such as *Robot Monster* (what isn't?), but will always be more notable for the film it inspired, than its own particular cinematic qualities.

JEFF SZPIRGLAS



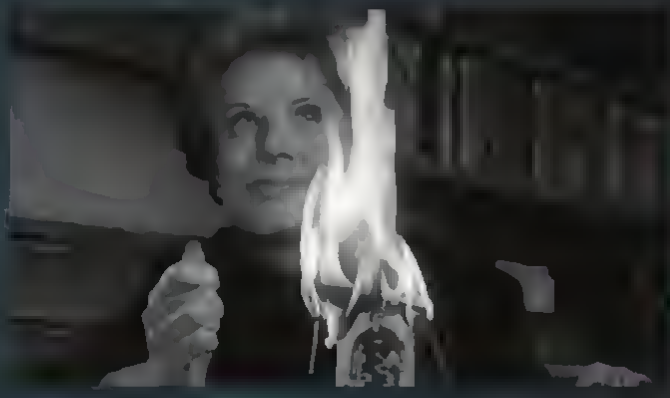


THE LATE-NITE ARCHIVE

FILE: Witchy Women

by Paul Corupe

They say that behind every great man stands a great woman, but this dusty cliché becomes the source of uncertainty and fear in 1962's *Burn, Witch, Burn*, a UK-shot tale of suburban witchcraft that hits Blu-ray this month, courtesy of Kino Lorber. This smart and well-made film, originally titled *Night of the Eagle*, soars above most horror programmers of the era, using a familiar set-up to tap into unease over evolving gender roles – and more specifically, one man's anxiety about whether he really wears the pants in his marriage.



Made at a time when there was a surge of women entering the workforce to pursue their own careers, the film focuses on the relationship breakdown between Professor Norman Taylor (Peter Wyngarde) and his wife Tansy (Janet Blair) as they try to adjust to life in a new suburban neighbourhood. Norman, who has taken a job at a nearby medical college, lectures his Psych 101 students about irrational belief in the occult. What he doesn't know is Tansy has been hiding protective charms around the house, convinced that another witch is preventing her husband from furthering his career. On discovering his wife has been dabbling in witchcraft, Norman collects a pile of her mystical objects and tosses them in the fireplace, accidentally burning the contents of a locket that included his own picture. With these protections gone, the mysterious witch launches more aggressive attacks to drive the hapless couple out.



As a film that largely deals with marital strife, *Burn, Witch, Burn* is a clever look at the way secrets, suspicion and dashed expectations can eat away at a relationship. The rift starts early on, as Norman first discovers a large spider carcass hidden in a dresser drawer that Tansy explains away as a souvenir from their recent trip to Jamaica. But as Norman uncovers more talismans, including vials of graveyard dirt and strange herbs, he begins to question whether he really knows his wife. The growing relationship gap is further complicated by one of Norman's students, Margaret (Judith Stott), whose crush on her stuffy prof gets more involved until she's making quasi-obscene phone calls to her stuffy prof. However, the most significant aspect of this breakdown is Norman's ultimate difficulty in accepting his wife's influence over his life and career. His initial disappointment over the charms gives way to a belief-shattering realization that he's simply a pawn in a war of black magic between his wife and a mysterious third figure.

Screenwriters Richard Matheson and fellow *Twilight Zone* scribe Charles Beaumont depict Norman's crisis of confidence and self-determination in several ways, including a delirious dream in which Tansy tells him, sinisterly, that "everything yours is mine." The conflict comes to a head when Tansy, in an evil trance, attacks her husband with a knife – a pivotal moment filmed with struggling shadows seen overtop a picture of the couple in happier times. It's only when Norman casts aside his own doubts that things improve. Tansy disappears at one point, hoping to kill herself to spare her husband, but Norman surrenders his beliefs and performs a graveyard witchcraft ritual to bring her back.

While much of the film's horror is intangible in this way, it's all brought together in a remarkable final reel when the stone eagle perched atop a college building comes to life and chases Norman through the grounds, his earlier anti-occult lecture blaring over a loudspeaker. He ends up in his classroom, up against a blackboard on which he had written "I Do Not Believe," now blotting out the third word as he avoids the bird's vicious attack. It's an exceptionally shot, show-stopping finale that moulds Norman's fears into flesh (well, rock anyways) and illustrates his own reluctant embrace of Tansy's influence and importance in their relationship.

It's in this way that *Burn, Witch, Burn* offers a more sophisticated approach to gender relations than earlier, similarly plotted horror films. In *I Married a Witch* (1942), for example, a woman (Veronica Lake) casts a spell to brainwash voters so her husband is unanimously elected and is stripped of her magic when she's discovered. Similarly, 1944's *Weird Woman* (like *Burn, Witch, Burn* also based on Fritz Leiber's 1943 novel *Conjure Wife*) has a college professor's innocent wife framed for incidences of perceived witchcraft in town. By allowing Tansy to enact a degree of control over their lives – to fight for them both against outside forces – she rises above these other witchy wives and proves that in her marriage, the pants are big enough for two.

IT CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT

DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

My Darling Serpentine

by John W Bowen



"The Druids No one knows who they were or what they were doing" – Spinal Tap

"I really hope they somehow have a snake guy offering a woman an apple" – Dave Alexander

Sorry Dave bit of a bust on that front However, at one point in *Jaws of Satan* (1981) we do get a priest striding boldly across a cave floor littered with rattlers in a clumsy approximation of the Bible passage "Behold, I give unto you the power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10 19 and yes_I had to Google that) so it's not a total loss But I'm getting ahead of myself here

Jaws of Satan (just released on a Blu-ray double feature with *Empire of the Ants*, by Scream Factory) begins with a snake on a train Seriously Well actually it opens with a shot of merging train tracks, resembling a forked tongue – ooh, film grammar! And that's followed directly by a guy rolling dice and getting – wait for it – snake eyes! That's some serpentine shit right there Then two disgruntled (and probably overpaid) layabout baggage car lackeys inform us that today s cargo includes greyhounds en route to a new dog track and a cobra en route to a zoo Or so they think until they get chomped by the reptile who then takes care of the engineer off camera and before you can say, "I have had it with this motherfucking snake on this motherfucking train!" the train stops and the cobra slithers away to unleash some fangy fuckery on the unsuspecting citizenry of Buggery Falls, Alabama Well almost but not quite, because a) that s not really the name of the town and b) while ol' Nat King Cobra doesn t flinch from wasting the righteous and the wicked alike he's got his sights set on one particular denizen of this backwater burg Father Tom Farrow (Fritz Weaver) And here s why



In another not-the-least-bit-contrived bit of exposition at a cocktail party for the local snooty set, we learn that Father Farrow – of the Sligo Farrows – numbers among his ancestors a priest who persecuted the hell out of some Druids in Ireland back in the day resulting in a curse on future generations The local medium/wiccan/friendly witch lady (Diana Douglas) takes one gander at the grounds in Farrow's coffee mug and faints dead away which never bodes well When she comes around she warns him he's in mortal danger From what? She can t quite say, but our money's already on that cobra, which can mind-meld with the local rattlesnake population Shit gets all slithery bitey and venomy around town for another hour or so before Farrow shows a couple of big-city herpetologists that all their book-learnin' and hypotheszin and grant-applyin' is no match for the power of prayer

Some lament the climax is arbitrary, clichéd and stupid Well pish-tosh and flapdoodle to that – at this particular point in this particular movie anything less than arbitrary clichéd and stupid would be all kinds of wrong The important thing is it involves fire and crazy fighting and crucifix brandishing and Father Farrow bellowing a bunch of deadly serious shit as befits this bumbling but spirited little footnote that had the bad fortune to miss the satanic cinema boat by about five years

Jaws of Satan was directed by Bob Clever a TV veteran boasting resume candy such as *The Partridge Family* *The Bob Newhart Show*, *Welcome Back Kotter* *Mork and Mindy* and – get ready to scrape *RM* staff writer and Blair 'n' Joe anthropologist April Snellings off the ceiling – *The Facts of Life* (No point in mentioning ill-advised revivals *The New Leave it to Beaver*, *The New Love, American Style* and *The Munsters Today*, is there? Oh Too late)

The cast also features Gretchen Corbett (*Let's Scare Jessica to Death*), and who s this playing the obligatory adorable precocious tow-headed moppet? Why it's a barely recognizable pre-Kelly Bundy and very-pre-Veronica Corningstone Christina Applegate Clumsy, pedestrian and almost fatally earnest, *Jaws of Satan* is unlikely to trigger trauma in even the most ophidiophobic of viewers, but it's a tasty enough feast of drive-in fast food that I'm recommending it unreservedly In the meantime, I suddenly find myself cravin' more Clever so you'd best get the hell out of my basement while I scour the torrent sites for lost episodes of *The New Leave it to Beaver* before I get too long in the tooth Yeah you read that right

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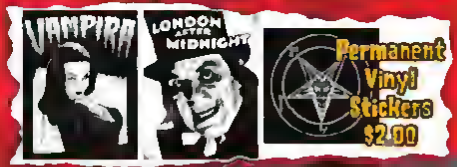
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BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

We may never know what really happened to the Lutz family during their stay at the infamous Amityville house on 112 Ocean Avenue back in late 1975. Over the course of 28 days, the Lutzes experienced several paranormal phenomena leading them to believe the house was possessed by evil spirits. They eventually fled the property forever, but their experiences launched one of the most notorious – and influential – haunted house stories in horror history.

Spawning several books and movies, *The Amityville Horror* franchise has nevertheless been conspicuously absent from the comic page – a strange omission in the current sea of horror movie and comic book tie-ins. Finnish writer Hannu Kesola has rectified the situation with *Amityville: The Roots of Evil*, a miniseries that finally gives the legendary home a chance to haunt the illustrated page.

"I wanted to bring the iconic house back to the centre of the story and explore some new possibilities that could tie into the *Amityville* mythos," explains Kesola. "I didn't just want to recycle old stuff, or retell stories that have already been told, but rather create a story that feels fresh but is still familiar to *Amityville* fans."



Last year, Kesola was working on a crime fiction series called "*Steel Knights*," published in *Heavy Metal Magazine*, and wanted to keep his momentum going. A discussion with Andrew Jones, director of 2013's *The Amityville Asylum*, inspired Kesola to visit the Amityville legend for his next project. The writer enlisted the services of artist Jaime Martinez, whose work he'd seen in the Amigo Comics' horror title *Roman Ritual*, and began to flesh out the new story.

From the beginning, Kesola wanted to avoid the Lutz family, whose experiences in the house remain the subject of much scepticism and controversy – not to mention various lawsuits. Instead, Kesola started with the DeFeo murders, in which 23-year-old Ronald DeFeo Jr. shot and killed his parents and four siblings – thirteen months before the Lutzes moved in.

Amityville: The Roots of Evil opens with the crime (although the DeFeo family has been renamed the Mitchells) before cutting to five-year-old Tom Hall watching the aftermath of the killings on television. Thirty years later, Tom and his new wife Anna purchase the house despite Tom's reluctance. It isn't long before strange things start occurring and Tom begins to act oddly, seeing gruesome visions of a creature dressed in early 1900s clothing, ordering him to kill. Along the way, fresh revelations about the Amityville curse are explored, shedding new light on many of the tales told about the house over the years.

"The idea of a haunted house is something that has always enthralled people, but it takes on a new level of terror when the house is your own," says Kesola. "A person's home should be a sanctuary, almost sacred, so it is quite scary to think that something horrible could happen there."

Kesola was especially keen to explore Tom and Anna's relationship, and its eventual breakdown under the house's influence. He believes this is the most appealing aspect of the tale, not the slamming doors, blood-dripping walls or violent apparitions that also populate the story.

"There are definitely horror elements, but it's mainly about how the lives of a young couple get destroyed bit by bit," he explains. "I didn't want to do a story that was all about gore, because I believe that a good story needs strong characters first and foremost, so people can relate to them. Hopefully I've achieved that."

When the blood does flow, Rodriguez' art is certainly up to the task of conveying the shocking viscera. Equally comfortable with the quieter, character-focused moments, the artist brings a grand, cinematic scope to the project, which hearkens back to the original films while also taking full advantage of the comics medium. ("I don't have to worry about a film budget. That's one big advantage comics have over movies," Kesola notes.)



***Amityville: The Roots of Evil** refocuses the mythology.*

Kesola is currently shopping the project around to various publishers and is hoping to have a deal finalized soon so that fans can enjoy a brand new chapter in the ongoing *Amityville* saga.

For release updates, visit Hannu Kesola's Facebook page at facebook.com/writerhannukesola *or follow him on Twitter* @hannu_kesola

FOLLOW PEDRO ON TWITTER @PCABEZUELO

QUICK CUTS

THIS MONTH: MONSTER KID COMICS



For more esoteric creatures, there are plenty of tentacles in *Kidthulhu Tales of Madness*, which chronicles the adventures of a ten-year-old monster of madness, his pet Shog and his pals Capi and Dagon-Boy. In the debut issue, Kidthulhu is summoned from his nap by the Followers of Old Ones, a human cult anticipating the arrival of a somewhat more menacing Elder God. Additional tales explore more of Kid's world and are filled with the hijinks you'd expect from children's fare (e.g. getting in and out of trouble). There are plenty of nods to Lovecraft's work for discerning adult readers, but they're unobtrusive, and the stories provide plenty of humour to keep youngsters entertained. The premise may seem like a cute joke on the part of author Martin E. Brandt, but it works on its own terms and is a fun read.

If you're wondering how to introduce your kids to all the wonders horror has to offer, rest assured there are a large number of horror-themed comics on the market for little monsters. Let's start with the basics, *Scooby-Doo* continues to be one of the best entry points for youngsters to learn all about vampires, ghosts and zombies – not to mention smugglers, counterfeiters and shady relatives. While most tykes will no doubt meet Scooby and gang in cartoon form, the character also has a successful history in comics, a tradition which continues with the current title *Scooby-Doo! Where Are You?* The latest issue sees Mystery Inc. tangle with a bridge-haunting, rhyming ghost, as well as a vampire who's giving the town of Wadsburg a major pain in the neck. The book nicely captures the tone and feel of the animated adventures and though the beats are familiar to anyone who's ever seen a *Scooby* story, predictability has always been a comforting hallmark of the series.



The monster mash continues in *Costume Quest: Invasion of the Candy Snatchers*, which sees the world of Repugia – inhabited solely by monsters – in the throes of a candy shortage. In order to impress the cool kids, Klem and his Grubbin pals Sollie and Brolo travel to the Human World in search of treats on Halloween (the one night of the year they can walk on Earth incognito). Naturally there are obstacles, including bullies both human and Grubbin, and a rapidly closing portal leading back home, threatening to strand the visitors. Writer/artist Zac Gorman fills the story with tremendous wit, both in words and the comic pacing of the visuals, which will appeal to adults just as much as kids. His creature designs are unique and whimsical, and there are some good, non-preachy lessons dealing with friendship and fitting in, which add an extra level of warmth to this already appealing story.



For slightly older readers there's *Battling Boy*, Paul Pope's expert fusion of super heroes, horror and adolescence. The megacity of Arcopolis is under siege by the evil Sadisto and his monster horde, which snatches children under the cover of night. The city's one-time protector, Haggard West, is dead and its only hope now lies in the hands of a teenage boy sent by mystical warriors from another realm. But the eager twelve-year-old is inexperienced and unsure of the powers granted to him. Can this new hero cleanse the streets of Arcopolis of its many dark horrors? At its core, *Battling Boy* is a coming-of-age story along the lines of *Harry Potter*, filled with the usual self-doubts and uncertainties that plague most adolescents. But it also boasts stellar artwork, quirky characters and dynamic action scenes that set the book apart as something unique.



For those seeking more darkness, there's *Through the Woods*, a collection of five stories by Emily Carroll that linger in the mind long after the book has been put down. The tales get under your skin with their themes of isolation, abandonment and insecurity. Dialogue is sparse yet effective, allowing Carroll to fill each page with plenty of disturbing imagery... a dismembered corpse held together by red ribbon, vast stretches of empty fields, mediums in the throes of possession, and, most effectively, faces that fall away to reveal squirming tendrils beneath. *Through the Woods* is perfect for teens looking for something thought-provoking, and who are interested in witnessing how horror can convey subtexts that go beyond cheap scares. Come to think of it, this is highly recommended for adult readers too.







THE NINTH CIRCLE BOOKS

THE SHAFT

David J Schow
Centipede Press

Given his notoriety as the so-called father of splatterpunk and a co-writer on *The Crow* script, it is frankly weird that David J. Schow's one horror novel, 1990's *The Shaft*, has never seen a North American release until now. Instead, out-of-print foreign editions and old-fashioned word of mouth have helped it accrue a reputation as a lost bloody treasure. Centipede Press has finally remedied this with a beautiful, high-end edition, which is at odds with the filth - both literal and figurative - on display within its pages.

The Shaft opens with Miami drug-runner Cruz fleeing to frigid, snowbound Chicago to escape the wrath of his vengeful boss in the wake of a tragic accident. He takes up residence in Kenilworth Arms, a rundown rooming house where he meets Jonathan, a Texan trying to escape a bad romance. Together with a prostitute named Jamaica, they become involved in a plot that sees them trying to rescue two kilos of cocaine from the building's ventilation shaft, tossed there by Cruz during a police raid. Too bad something horrific and inhuman lives at the bottom of that shaft.



Schow's reputation as a splatterpunk is well-deserved. *The Shaft*'s scenes of violence are sick-inducing, with vivid imagery recalling the body horror of early David Cronenberg and Clive Barker. Schow has a special talent for painting a world perpetually encrusted with filth, of origins both known and unknown. Filth as a noun becomes a metaphor when talking about the book's villains, especially Cruz's boss, Emilio, whose sexual appetites run from sadistic to fatal.

Indeed, the book's true horror lies less in the meaty monsters that emerge from the Kenilworth's dark heart than in Schow's smart dissection of his characters. Some of *The Shaft*'s strongest scenes illuminate Kenilworth's tenants/victims, all of whom live lives of quiet desperation to one degree or another.

Centipede's 300-copy run includes a foreword by *The Keep* author F. Paul Wilson, an afterword by Schow himself, the original *Shaft* short story and macabre illustrations by artist David Ho. (Each copy is autographed by all three.)

All in all, it's a handsome package for a book that takes such pleasure in detailing the ugliness of the human heart.

SEAN PLUMMER

WHEN WE WERE ANIMALS

Joshua Gaylord
Mulholland Books

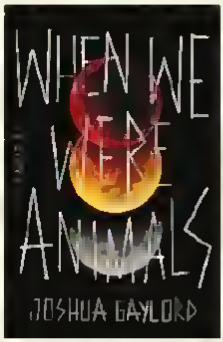
Joshua Gaylord gives a whole new meaning to the phrase "youth gone wild." His story is centered on Lumen Fowler, who's growing up in a suburban town called Polikwakanda that allows its adolescent residents to "breach" (a.k.a. run wild in the streets and let their hormonal demons loose) when the full moon strikes. The compelling concept is reminiscent of 2013's *The Purge*, and coming from the mind of a five-time published author with a PhD in English, one would expect a terrifying tale of supernatural wonder, but sadly, like *The Purge*, *When We Were Animals* fails to fully deliver on its premise.

Told from the pages of Lumen's teenage diary, our protagonist is a model child: she's polite, she does what she's told and she overachieves in school. Her recollected memories and flashes of her future self throughout the book arouse great anticipation for her big moment, but her late breaching turns out to be a surprisingly textbook coming-of-age tale in which she gives in to sexual temptation, experiments with violence and sublimates all the angsty feelings most teen girls keep pent up. Her experiences include two sexual partners, getting stitches and experiencing the emotional struggles of her father dating again. Lumen winds up getting through the ordeal, only to go from a pretty standard girl to a pretty standard suburban housewife. All of which begs the question: what exactly was the point of this breach?

Breaching as a metaphor for puberty is both heavy-handed and ultimately ineffective. *When We Were Animals* had great potential for havoc, horror and intrigue but falls flat as it conveys Lumen's journey from adolescent goody two-shoes to adult goody two-shoes. As a result, the novel reads more like a teenager's version of *Everybody Poops*, only replacing elimination anxiety with the trials of hormones and puberty. The violence isn't especially inhuman or animalistic and the sex scenes are little more than PG-13 teases.

Toss this one unto the breach, and move on.

AMY BRIDGES



MIDIAN UNMADE

Joseph Nassise and Del Howison, eds.
Tor Books

For a film that suffered such an ignominious fate at the box office, the monsters of Clive Barker's *Nightbreed* have experienced a massive resurgence of late, with a re-released director's cut of the film, a monthly comic series and now *Midian Unmade*, a new anthology based in the world of Barker's 1990 cult classic.

Using both the movie and the novella that inspired it (1988's *Cabal*) as its springboard, this collection of short stories details what happened to The Breed after the destruction of Midian, their subterranean home. The stories feature a mix of familiar characters and new additions created specifically for the anthology. The themes running through these stories are consistent, though: loss, loneliness and a search for a place to call home, with characters hiding in a strange and hostile world that views them as "the enemy." Oh, there's also revenge – gruesome, bloody revenge against The Naturals (a.k.a. humanity) that drove them from Midian and killed their kin.

Anthology highlights include Amber Benson's visceral 'Pride,' in which a young



***Midian Unmade:** A creature from Clive Barker's Nightbreed*



Breed girl stalks a pack of all-too-human monsters, Paul J. Salamoff's "Tamara," about a Breed who assumes the form of its victims to live their lives, and Seanan McGuire's touching "The Moon Inside," which puts the spotlight on Babette, *Cabal*'s young cat-like shapeshifter, now a teenager and hiding in the shadows of Seattle. But there are other tales to be told, including ones from the point of view of The Breed's enemies. Both "And Midian Whispered its Name" and "Button, Button" feature the original story's iconic mask-wearing psychopath, Dr. Decker, and put him to effectively chilling use.

If there is one caveat to be had, however, it's this: *Midian Unmade* is very much a book for those already firmly entrenched in the mythos, both novella and film. The stories' weight and relevance come from the events established by Barker and, while the tales do attempt to fill in the blanks for those unfamiliar with *Nightbreed*, there's only so much recap one can do with limited page space. Still, with so much imagination and love for the mythology on display, *Midian Unmade* is recommended reading for those who love the creatures of the night. It's also proof that every monster has its day.

RON MCKENZIE

EXPIRATION DATE

Nancy Kilpatrick, ed.
Edge

In *Expiration Date*, an anthology brimming with melancholic tales about death and dying, the book's editor, three-time Bram Stoker Award finalist Nancy Kilpatrick, sets her stall out early. In her deft introduction, she speaks of how we must constantly check the expiration dates on mundane items – food, contracts, warranties – before she touches on the weightier topic of human mortality. As morbid as the intro is, it's fascinating and compelling and sets a solid path for what lies ahead.

The anthology opens with Kelley Armstrong's "Sorry Seems to be the Hardest Word," a quirky vampire tale about a classy female bloodsucker who blows into town to ask a

THE GRIM READER



MODERN MYTHMAKERS

Michael McCarty
Crystal Lake Publishing

Michael McCarty's entertaining collection of interviews with some true giants of horror and sci-fi cinema – including late greats Ray Bradbury, Forry Ackerman, Richard Matheson and Dan Curtis – has been reissued on the Crystal Lake imprint with a nominal amount of new material. Pity some much needed copy editing wasn't thrown into the remix, but that's a quibble given the dark riches lurking here, so dive in.

JOHN W. BOWEN



WITHIN THESE WALLS

Amie Ahlborn
Gallery Books

Lucas, a washed-up writer, is lured across the country to a remote town by "the Jeff," an ersatz Charles Manson, with the promise of finally confessing his secrets. Jeff's charisme has already claimed ten lives, and Lucas must try to avoid getting his head added to the pile. Toeing the line between supernatural and earthly horror, *Within These Walls* is a worthwhile and disturbingly relatable slow-burning thriller.

DEIRDRE CRIMMINS



THE WORLD BEFORE US

Aislinn Hunter
Hogarth

If ghosts are but the echo of memory, Aislinn Hunter's gothic novel chimes like a symphony, delicately intertwining the pathways of the departed and unborn. The novel chronicles Jane Standen's investigation into the 19th-century disappearance of a rogue child seemingly swallowed by the woods. Equally plagued by her own harrowing encounter in the forest, Jane must discern the link between these events – and perhaps, the key resides within the mouths of the undead themselves.



LUCID

Jay Bonansinga
Permuted Premium

Named for the act of lucid dreaming – which leads teenage protagonist Lori to discover an entrance to Limbo in her nightmares, where she meets those who work to prevent demonic possessions – *Lucid* boasts a really great concept. It's a shame the book's editing isn't equally great, trimming back some of the overzealous descriptions and abundance of ellipses would have made this read like a dream.

VERONICA S. KUEBLER

THE SEA OF BLOOD TAKES READERS ON A STRANGE, UNSETTLING JOURNEY THROUGH AUTHOR REGGIE OLIVER'S BODY OF WORK

AMONG THE TOMBS

DEJAN OGNJANOVIĆ

IN REGGIE OLIVER'S INTRODUCTION TO HIS 400-PAGE RETROSPECTIVE COLLECTION, *THE SEA OF BLOOD*, the British author explains that his writing is inspired by "the terrible strangeness just beneath the surface of the ordinary" and by "the unsettling interaction between the physical and the metaphysical." Sure enough, Oliver's stories offer a modern take on the classical English ghost stories as perfected by M.R. James at the beginning of the 20th century.

"Though a hundred years separate our lives," Oliver says, "I feel I have a considerable affinity with M.R. James. There is no doubt that his style, subject matter and technique have influenced mine. He is one of those writers whose strength is in his limitations and who, within a small compass, produced some masterly work."

Yet, Oliver's writing is far above Jamesian pastiche, it is clearly derived not from what he has read but how he has come to see the world, and it contains some of the best horror prose of this century. His range of subject matter is greater than that James and he has a brooding voice uniquely his own. In his stories, one finds more psycho sexual nuances, character-based horrors and nastiness, while his ghosts and other creatures have brought the Old Master's ability to creep you out to a whole new level. These strange tales perpetually inhabit small seaside towns, dingy hotels and lodging houses, ruined theatres and old churches where ancient terrors surface through newly found letters, diaries and forgotten tomes. The atmosphere is laden with palpable dread, caused by dire prophecies from a copiously menstruating nun ("The Time of Blood"), a house haunted by ghosts of midgets ("Baskerville's Midgets"), the undying, true Jack the Ripper ("Mrs Midnight"), a saintly woman's attempts to help a possessed man ("Among the Tombs"), and a medium whose ectoplasm may give gruesome shape to the messages from beyond ("The Old Silence").



What elevates these stories is their melancholy mood and an insight into the human condition that makes them both heartfelt and thought-provoking. The supernatural, for Oliver, is not merely a gimmick.

"I believe absolutely in metaphysical reality," he says, "that we are not just physical matter, and that such concepts as Good and Evil and the Soul are not simply human and societal constructs, but have a reality beyond our conception and control. I would not describe myself as naturally psychic, but I am susceptible to atmosphere and it is the experience of this sense that has inspired many of my stories. Certain places have aroused in me strong feelings unrelated to what I have known about them."

One such place is the Grand Theatre in Landudno, whose creepy vibes inspired his first story, "Beside the Shrill Sea," about a troupe of actors and their love-and-hate interrelations that continue even after one of them passes away.

"The character of Jane is based on an old friend of mine, Jill, who was genuinely psychic," Oliver says. "She saw things in that theatre which I did not see, though I was strongly aware of its peculiar and rather malign atmosphere. She also did experience the feeling of something dark passing through her on the night that the character on which Ray is based died. I recorded it in my diary."

Oliver began his career as an actor and playwright and turned to writing only when he was about 50, with the collection *The Dreams of Cardinal Vittorini and Other Strange Stories* (2003). Five more collections followed, mostly for specialty publishers Ash-Tree Press and Tartarus Press, but his stories received wider visibility through anthologies, including *Year's Best Fantasy & Horror* and *The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror*.

The Sea of Blood, out now from Dark Renaissance with a great cover by Santiago Caruso, offers a good overview of Oliver's oeuvre, plus three never-before-published stories ("I am really not sure whether this is my 'best of,'" he notes, "but I have certainly not included any inferior examples of my work!")

These days Oliver is returning to his first love, theatre, as the Grand Inquisitor in Jonathan Moore's play *Inigo*, while as to writing, which he calls his "co-first love," he has a short novel called *The Bake of the Devil* coming from Dark Renaissance, a new collection from Tartarus titled *Holidays from Hell*, and *The Hauntings at Tankerton Park and How They Got Rid of Them*, a bizarre children's book that he is also doing more than 60 illustrations for.

As he says, "Life is not dull." Quite the opposite: it is full of strangeness, mystery and intimations of the beyond.



lesser immortal a favour, as the weaker vampire has an agenda of her own. It's followed by David Sesrome's "Banshee," about a composer who lost his wife and now hears her voice from beyond, which he attempts to block out with music. But when he leaves his MP3 player at the pub one night, it proves to be a fatal mistake.

Some stories, such as "In a Moment" and "The Long Wait," show the kinder side of Death – how the reaper is there to comfort and help the dying cross over to the other side. Others, such as "The Deaths of Jeremiah Colverson" and "The Twenty Seven Club," are more light hearted in their approach. The latter concerns a rock star who tries to escape the cold, bony clutches of Death, when the time comes to collect the musician's soul in return for years of fame and fortune. He soon learns that Death cannot be bartered with.

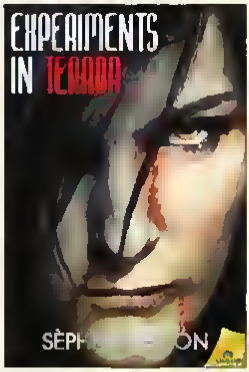
Overall, the stories in *Expiration Date* are excellent, and tend to pull on the ol' heartstrings. Despite its morbid, often depressing, content, the anthology is comforting in its own way – after all, there's some small consolation in knowing someone will be waiting for you at the end, even if he's holding a scythe.

DAVID OWAIN HUGHES

EXPERIMENTS IN TERROR

Sèphera Giron
Samhain Publishing

When body horror is done well, it can be an endlessly terrifying subgenre. It's ingrained in our psyche to fear disease, pain and mutilation, and although this may make it seem like an easy sub genre to work in as long as you toss in enough oozy pus wounds, bone breaking and/or skin tearing, *Experiments in Terror* proves just the opposite. This paperback, featuring two novellas by Sèphera Giron about dark matters of the human body, is too poorly executed to make for a compelling read, despite being peppered with moments of nauseating discomfort.



The first piece, *Captured Souls*, follows the Frankenstein-esque mad doctor Miriam Frederick, who insatiably seeks the perfect lover, leading her to kidnap several people and make them part of her extreme experiment. After months of keeping them imprisoned, regularly drugging and sexually assaulting them, everything goes awry with her plan to amalgamate the group into one perfect specimen.

The story suffers from inconsistent characters. For instance, in one scene a victim will be horribly mutilated and sexually humiliated, then, a few pages later, act not only like a consensual partner, but like a perturbed roommate who's angry because the dishes have been left out. Yet with these problems, *Captured Souls* will make you squirm, as the story serves up increasingly violent moments of exploitation, which grow more perverse with each page.

The second novella, *Flesh Failure*, follows a woman who claws her way out of a grave only to find herself in Jack the Ripper's London. She's thrust into a race to survive – whatever almost killed her before is stalking her again – while trying to get answers about who she is and why she's seemingly manifested out of nothing. The tale uses atmosphere more effectively than the previous novella, and by toning down the mutilation, it's far more subtle.

While in *Captured Souls* Giron throws as much rape and lunacy as she can at the reader, in *Flesh Failure* she demonstrates that a few maggots crawling out of a living body can be far more chilling. If only all of *Experiments in Terror* was so effective.

RICHELLE CHARKOT

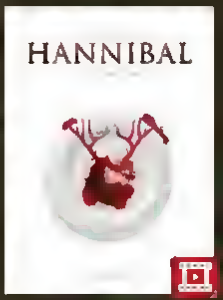
LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

FINE CANNIBAL CUISINE

I still remember the words I uttered immediately after watching *Hannibal*'s season two finale: "I can't believe they got away with airing that on network television!"

Flash back to 1996 and *The X-Files* episode "Home." The story about an inbred family that kept its matriarch (amputated limbs and all) hidden under a filthy bed had an advisory warning tacked onto it when it first aired. The Fox network subsequently refused to screen it ever again because it was *that* disturbing. Yes, we've sure come a long way in two decades.

Jesse McLean's *The Art and Making of Hannibal: The Television Series* (out now from Titan Books) goes to great lengths to describe the construction of the show's murder set pieces and just how they get the grisly stuff past the Broadcast Standards and Practices department. Hint: it has a lot to do with the colour of the blood (the darker and less red it is, the more you can show) and casting certain things in shadows. We also learn that the "Praying Angels" murder (episode five, season one), which saw a naked couple posed with the skin of their backs flayed to resemble wings, had more issues with the visible butt cracks than the gore. In fact, covering up the offending body parts with more grue was the solution that got the episode a pass. It's hard to imagine *The X-Files* being offered such a fix twenty years ago.



McLean spends almost as much space discussing the show's colour palette, themes (the idea of "becoming" is central) and cast of characters. Creator Bryan Fuller, stars Mads Mikkelsen, Hugh Dancy, Caroline Dhavernas and Laurence Fishburne, among others, are quoted extensively, which, along with hundreds of full-colour on-set photos, brings an official feel to the proceedings. The downside is that it also makes the absences stick out; you'll find no words from Gillian Anderson, Katharine Isabelle or Gina Torres, which is unfortunate because it would have been interesting to hear more female voices discussing the material. Similarly, while an abundance of time is spent on aesthetics and special effects, just a few pages at the end of the book spotlight the sound design and score.

The Art and Making of Hannibal: The Television Series is undoubtedly a fine entrée, enriching the viewing experience of one of the most challenging horror shows on TV, but it could have used a bit more in-depth exploration to make it a truly well-rounded buffet. Though it falls a tad short, that's still no reason to throw away a perfectly good meal, however.

Perhaps over dessert we could guess at the look of genre TV twenty years from now.

MONICA S. KUEBLER

THE FRIGHT GALLERY

CURATED BY GARY PULLIN

THIS MONTH: JOSHUA HOFFINE – THE SHADOW OVER INNSMOUTH

Long-time readers will instantly recognize Joshua Hoffine's cinematic brand of photography – we featured his work in *RM#87* and *RM#100*. For the uninitiated, Hoffine creates nightmares in still life by constructing elaborate sets and original props with which to stage his images. With the help of FX monster maker J. Anthony Kosar, the resulting images are positively haunting and, often, terrifying too. Hoffine's latest masterpiece is an incredibly ambitious take on H.P. Lovecraft's *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* and, as of press time, the project had met the $20,000 Kickstarter goal required to bring this complex image to life. I caught up with Hoffine to get some extra insight into his impending trip to Innsmouth.

It's crazy how much planning and staging goes into one of your photos. Do you use a storyboard, such as a director would with a film?

In the past, I never made drawings. I would instead write a one-paragraph "treatment" describing the image in detail. I preferred this approach so that my mind would stay open to new possibilities on set. However, once I started trying to raise money for projects on Kickstarter, it became necessary to start storyboarding so everyone could understand what I was going for.

How did you manage to book actor Doug Jones for it? What was his reaction to your idea?

I was actually trying to reach Elijah Wood for the part, but having no luck. My producer Chad Hawks – who played Jack the Ripper for me – suggested Doug Jones instead. I loved the suggestion and had Chad, who knew him a little bit, reach out on my behalf. He was already a fan of my FX artist J. Anthony Kosar, so it was an easy pitch. He loved my photos and – even more – that I wanted to use his real face as an actor, rather than bury him under latex as a suit performer. I usually use friends or family as models, so it is very exciting to have a performer of his calibre in one of my pictures!



You seem to have a great partnership with Kosar. Is he in charge of designing the look of the monsters too or do you provide sketches?

I do give him a lot of art direction, including sketches, but I always leave enough breathing room for him to interpret my instructions. I tell him to make it something that he is proud of. My biggest art direction for Innsmouth was that the fish men – the Deep Ones – needed to be scary. I didn't want any pathos. I suggested he look at piranhas and those scary angler fish that live in darkness at the bottom of the ocean for research. He does a great job of taking my ideas and making them his own. Even though I can see my suggestions in his design, the final work always takes me by pleasant surprise.



How can someone get a print of Innsmouth?

We plan to debut the final image at the NecronomiCon event in Providence, Rhode Island – Lovecraft's hometown – on August 21. After the debut, I will make prints available for purchase through my website. Kosar is going to be selling masks and maquettes of the monsters as well.

You've already tackled a photo series for "Pickman's Model," called Pickman's Masterpiece. Are you planning a series of Lovecraft tributes?

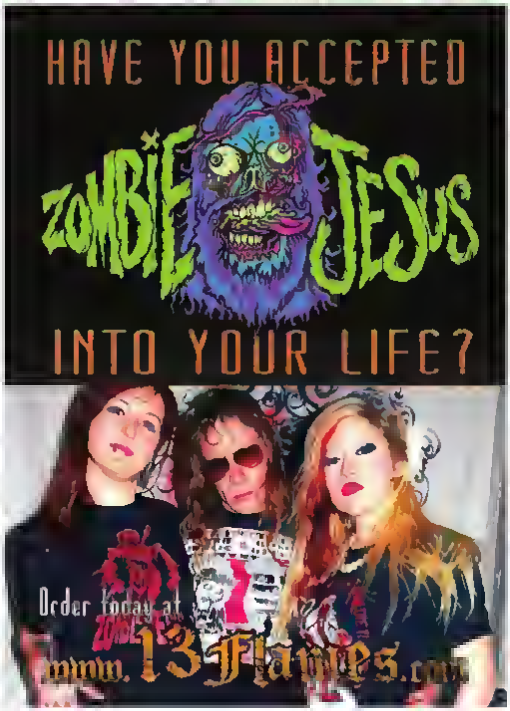
I really enjoy Lovecraftian imagery. If possible, I would love to do a photo project based on Cthulhu!

Concept sketch and Innsmouth sculpt by J. Anthony Kosar. Photo by Sean McElwee.



ArkhamBazaar.com

EVERYTHING FOR H.P. LOVECRAFT & CTHULHU FANS







THE GORE-MET

SAME OLD INGREDIENTS, DEADLY NEW DISHES



In horror, everything old can be new again, so let's look at two fresh spins on well-worn tropes.

After the zombie film, backwoods survival horror is perhaps the most played-out subgenre there is. For every *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), *Rituals* (1978) or *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977), there are hundred low-budget flicks such as *Psycho Holocaust* (2009), *Bunnyman* (2011) or *Red River* (2011). But however hackneyed movies about hulking brutes stalking and killing people in the woods can be, there's a certain comfort in knowing exactly what you're going to get: some splatter!

Marcel Walz' *Blood Valley. Seed's Revenge* (2014) is one of those. There's nothing new in it, the plot is an amalgam of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *The Hills Have Eyes*, but hey, it's ladled with '00s ultra-gore.

The set-up is simple: four young women pile into an RV for the trip back to Chicago after a bachelorette party in Las Vegas. While driving through the Nevada desert, they pick up a male hitchhiker who, not surprisingly, turns out to be a creep. After they successfully ditch him, they come across a female sheriff's deputy (Manoush) on the road. She asks them for a ride to the nearest town, but alas, the RV suddenly won't work, so the deputy and two of the girls decide to take a shortcut through the desert to get help. Enter the masked Max Seed (Nick Principe) and his giant knife.



This is, of course, a sequel to Uwe Boll's slasher *Seed*, produced by Boll and written by Walz. Given the familiarity of the plot though, it may as well be a standalone film. Seed savagely kills people, in a movie like this, motivations are meaningless. The real attraction is the old-school gore, and there's plenty of it, courtesy of Canadians Megan and Ryan Nicholson (*Live Feed*, *Gutterballs*, *Collar*). There's stabbing, bludgeoning, shooting and throat slitting, as well as a crucifixion and the film's standout gross-out: a revolver rape with a bullet climax. It's all grittily done in a beautiful location – the Valley of Fire State Park in Nevada – and set to a delightfully overbearing ambient score with sides of tasty rock and country music. Caroline Williams (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*) has an extended cameo in the closing credit sequence, which you need to watch right to the end. Look for it on Netflix and on DVD from Phase IV Films.



Long-time readers will recall that I originally wrote about Anthony Matthews' '70s exploitation throwback *Revenge is Her Middle Name* back in 2011 and hosted a screening of it at the Festival of Fear that August. Almost four years later it will finally hit DVD courtesy of Unearthed Films.

The plot draws from both classic blaxploitation and rape/revenge films, such as *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978) and *Ms. 45* (1981). Kat (Lissa Brennan) is a drug-addicted prostitute who dreams of starting a family with her junkie boyfriend, Dolph (Michael Todd Schneider). Kat and Dolph plan to finance their new life by ripping off and murdering a violent pimp named Mutton Chop (Douglass Bell), but don't quite get the job done. Mutton Chop and his henchmen then grab the hapless pair and slit Dolph's throat after viciously gang-raping Kat. She survives and tells the police she is unable to identify her attackers, opting to take righteous retribution of her own.

Matthews got a lot of movie for $4000, due in no small part to intense performances by the entire cast. Toetag Pictures FX master Jerami Cruise provided the gruesome effects, which include a couple of nasty throat slashings, head shots and a gloryhole penectomy. It's all topped off by a fantastic score that includes Goblinesque music from The Giallo's Fleme.

The DVD features a leaner, meaner edit of the original cut. Extras include *The Night Stinger*, a short film by Matthews that presaged the feature, trailers, extended and deleted scenes, a making-of featurette and a commentary track with Matthews and Schneider, who also edited the film. In an era when gore filmmakers must reduce, reuse and recycle, these guys are giving us some pretty good bang for our bucks.

Horror in Culture & Entertainment

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PLUMMER AND GLENN TILSON



DEMONS (1985)

SOUNDTRACK

Claudio Simonetti

RUSTBLADE

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of *Demons*, Italy's Rustblade label brings Claudio Simonetti's score back into circulation on CD and LP – a testament to the longevity of the composer's insanely catchy title theme. The sampled and processed "D-D-D-Demonz" vocals add another layer of rhythm to the cue's existing bass hits and guitar licks, while Simonetti also quotes from Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg's deliciously malevolent *Peer Gynt*. Equally effective is "Killing," which acts as a motor during the more gory sequences, boasting an assaultive bass pulse for the flesh-hungry hybrids and thick, plaintive synths for the doomed cinemagoers. Rustblade's mastering of the original score is impeccable, as are the bonus tracks of unreleased demo and subsequent album and live versions of the *Demons* theme, but the neatest surprise is a sleek lounge version that's instrumentally a precursor to *The Card Player*, featuring great keyboard solos, cool tones and Afro-jazz vocals! Also included a bonus remix CD featuring Skinny Puppy's Ohgr and others. ★★★★ MRH



DUEL (1971)

SOUNDTRACK

Billy Goldenberg

INTRADA SPECIAL COLLECTION

In the 1970s, Billy Goldenberg was the go-to composer for horror and thriller TV movies that relied on music to transcend their limited budgets. *Duel* gave the prolific artist a rare chance to experiment with a sparse instrumental palette and write music to keep the viewer in a perpetual state of unease. Steven Spielberg's taut teleplay didn't need any orchestral goosing, but it certainly benefitted from a great melange of weird sounds which evoke the mounting paranoia of being all alone on the road. *Duel*'s rare thematic material spirals, chimes and often sounds deeply strained, whereas the demonic truck's appearances are enhanced with water chimes, grungy audio processing and Herrmannesque strings. Rhythms erupt and gnash over each other, and "Final Duel" is a perfect evocation of an animal running uphill at full speed to what it hopes is safety. Let's hope Intrada's fine CD (in stereo!) is the first of more Goldenberg classics. ★★★★ MRH



GOBLIN REBIRTH

ROCK

Goblin Rebirth

RELAPSE

Are two Goblins twice as good as one? Or is that three? We've lost count of how many different versions of the seminal Italian prog rock outfit exist at this point. In any case, the answer remains "not quite." Like other incarnations, Goblin Rebirth goes heavy on the keys, though bassist Fabio Pignatelli (an original Goblin member) gets to shine on "Book of Skulls" and the catchy, vocoder-voiced, potential single "Evil in the Machine." Argento-ly speaking, "Mysterium" evokes the classic *Deep Red* while "Forest" calls the more obscure *Sleepless* to mind. Reconciliation between all parties would be an unholy Godsend, until then *Goblin Rebirth* is superior to New Goblin's *Back to the Goblin* but can't touch the amazing *Live in Roma* double album. And guys, do I really need to point out that Asia Argento's been releasing albums of her own? Collaboration, please! ★★★★ GT



PART 1

GOTH

Funeral Parade EP

SACRED BONES RECORDS

They rose from the same early '80s anarcho-punk movement that spawned Crass but Part 1's adolescently gloomy lyrics and flanged guitars bring 1982's *Funeral Parade EP* (recently reissued by Sacred Bones) closer to deathrock or goth. Guitarist Mark Ferelli, who recently reformed the band for its first gigs since 1983, mercilessly rips off contemporaries Geordie Walker of Killing Joke and John McGeoch of Siouxsie and the Banshees, while singer Chris Baker tunelessly spouts death-obsessed screeds that come off like sad high school poems. "Your coffin drops into your grave / But the dead are alive / You're clawing at your wooden tomb / But how will you survive?" he warbles on "Graveyard Song." Sacred Bones has reissued the six-track EP in a deluxe vinyl package that includes Ferelli's horror 'zine *I*, *Paraworm*, but the tinnily-produced *Funeral Parade* deserves less to be unearthed than it does a decent burial. ★ SP



GENKI GENKI PANIC

SURF

Ghoulie High Harmony

INDEPENDENT

Echoing the mondo-weirdo retro vibe of spook 'n' surf greats The Ghastly Ones and Satan's Pilgrims, Chattanooga, Tennessee's Genki Genki Panic revels in reverb-soaked instrumentals that reference the macabre with cheeky winks and nudges, and competent, inventive instrumentation. With an exotic, tiki-meets-belly dance rhythm and Carpenter-esque solos, "Camp Crystal Lake" re-envisions *Friday the 13th* as a '60s spy thriller directed by Quentin Tarantino circa 1996, while "976-EVIL" thrills more with

THE CAR (1977)

SOUNDTRACK

Leonard Rosenman

INTRADA SPECIAL COLLECTION



On the score for *The Car*, a ridiculous film about a customized Lincoln Mark III possessed by the Devil, Leonard Rosenman smashes together the liturgical "Dies Irae" with serial composition as performed by an angry orchestra that seems to want to grab your soul. It's surprising how few horror works Rosenman scored in his career, given that his tremendous command of an orchestra often yields marvellously terrifying results. *The Car* score makes its debut in this pristinely-mastered CD, and though it's a sparse score, it's worth every penny. Typical of Rosenman's masterworks *Prophecy* and *Fantastic Voyage*, *The Car* also features dissonance and heavy brass, with sounds constantly shifting between each other, rarely settling into any state of calm. The real magic lies in the tonal colours that culminate in a frenetic, percussive car chase and a catchy "End Credits" that'll have you humming "Dies Irae" for hours. Play it loud in a dark room on your best hi-fi. ★★★★★ MRH

LISTEN to MY NIGHTMARE

Forty years ago Alice Cooper fulfilled a career goal with his first solo album *Welcome to My Nightmare*, a horror concept record that combined Alice's shock rock with the over-the-top theatrics he long pushed his original band to adopt. *Welcome to My Nightmare* (also a TV special, world tour and concert film) features the disco-styled title track, the necrophiliac rocker "Cold Ethyl," the chilling trilogy "Years Ago"/"Steven"/"The Awakening," and Vincent Price famously introducing "Black Widow." As a Coop devotee, I titled this column after his game-changing release, and to celebrate its 40th anniversary I decided to ask some of the top musicians influenced by it to share their thoughts on the album.



Slash: *It's just awesome and ahead of its time in terms of composition, arrangements and Alice's theatrical vision. I'm a big horror buff so I loved that the music is so creepy and has that edge to it, thanks to Alice's fascination with horror. All these big artists from the '70s, like The Who and Led Zeppelin, were releasing these seminal productions that were really influential and stood the test of time.* Welcome to My Nightmare *is that album for Alice.*

John 5: *Even at an early age I knew it sounded different than everything else I heard on the radio. This album is* real *musical genius – it has so many different styles of music; it made me understand different styles of music, and I love it so much today. It is by far one of my favourite Alice Cooper albums.*

Doyle Wolfgang von Frankenstein: *I remember when it came out and there was a* Welcome to My Nightmare *movie on in theatres. I thought it was great, it was like a fucking play! I loved the cyclops! And pretty much that's why I look like this. ... It was a huge influence on my music life. When I finally met him and he knew my name, my mind was blown.*

King Diamond: *I saw the tour in Copenhagen in 1975 and I remember it like it happened yesterday. It was so impressive, it almost didn't feel real, like if I reached up and touched him he would poof into thin air. ... I thought, "If I play in a band, it's going to be like this." Alice Cooper showed me how powerful makeup can be in a show.*

Dee Snider: *I'm a huge fan and love some of the stuff on that album, but also I recognize that it spelled the end for the guys in the band. ... On my radio show I'm always making a point of talking about the original Alice Cooper band because people have forgotten there even was a band. There is more than just the frontman. It's too bad there was no reunion after* Welcome to My Nightmare, *but as you know, Alice was off to the races.*

AARON VON LUPTON

its up-tempo "I'm-being-stalked-by-something-terrible urgency than the song's namesake movie ever could. Featuring sly titles such as "HPV Lovecraft," "The Spectrophiliac" and "Your Body Is a Wasteland," plus attitude and atmosphere to spare, *Ghoulie High Harmony* will bring all the ghosts in invisible bikinis down to your horror hangout at party beach. ★★★★ JS



GRUESOME

METAL

Savage Land

RELAPSE RECORDS

Gruesome, a American supergroup of sorts - featuring members of Exhumed, Possessed and Divine Empire - exists for one reason: to pay homage to Floridian legends Death, specifically early-to-mid-period classics *Leprosy* and *Spiritual Healing*. In fact, not only is the cover art by Ed Repka (responsible for the visuals on both of those splatter classics), there's a solo by ex-Death guitarist James Murphy on – wait for it – "Closed Casket!" (a reference to Death's encore song "Open Casket"). Gruesome's monomaniacal Chuck Schuldiner obsession extends to vocal tone and cadence, even the lyrical style in the band's tributes to *Hellraiser* ("Trapped In Hell") and *The Exorcist* ("Demonized") matches that of their unabashed inspiration. If you're looking for surprises, look elsewhere, but if Relapse's recent triple dose of Death reissues left you hungry for more, make like the anthropophagi pictured above and sink your teeth in. ★★★ GT



SIX FEET UNDER

METAL

Crypt of the Devil

METAL BLADE

Crypt of the Devil finds Chris Barnes and Six Feet Under slinging the guts and gore like it's 1995. They enlisted Phil "Landphil" Hall (bass beast of Cannabis Corpse, Municipal Waste and others) for songwriting assistance and though the album is miles from being as legendary as their twenty-year-old debut splatter-platter *Haunted*, it's still a spiritual return to the fetid form of yesteryear. Opening tracks "Gruesome" and "Open Coffin Orgy" sport much of their classically gory lyrical flavour but feature a mechanical, off-kilter sound that may ruffle the feathers of purists and long-time fans. Thankfully, "Slit Wrists," "Break the Cross in Half" and "Stab" have that comfortable thick SFU chugga-chugga that brings to mind an angry behemoth wading through pools of congealed blood. It closes with the breakneck, nihilistic thrasher "Eternal In Darkness" reminding us there are far worse fates than being interred in the *Crypt of the Devil*. ★★★ JS



WOODEN STAKE

METAL

A Feast of Virgin Souls

RAZORBACK RECORDS

All too often the word "occult" seems to be shorthand for "folksy *Wicker Man*-lite," conjuring images of maypoles, patchwork flares and gnomic hats. While witchy melodies *do* permeate Wooden Stake's second full-length, it's at least intertwined them with gurgling invocations, thumping, cudgel-like riffing and the kind of loping "Children of the Grave" gait that might make Tony Iommi raise an eyebrow. The output is as heavy as you'd expect an album from Razorback to be and the creepy vibes definitely suit songs citing Elizabeth Bathory and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* as sources of inspiration. On occasion things become a touch too monochromatic, but *A Feast of Virgin Souls* is still enjoyably gnarled and a darn sight more refreshing than taking a dip in a tepid bath full of blood. ★★★ AD

CRADLE OF FILTH STIRS THE CAULDRON OF DARK MAGIC WITH *HAMMER OF THE WITCHES*



CRADLE OF FILTH FRONTMAN DANI FILTH OWNS MULTIPLE COPIES OF THE *MALLEUS MALEFICARUM*, WHICH IS NOT SURPRISING GIVEN HIS BAND'S LONG-STANDING PREOCCUPATION WITH THE DARK ARTS

First published around 1487 and known as *The Witches' Hammer* in English, the *Malleus Maleficarum* was, for nearly three centuries, the manual witch hunters used to recognize and pass judgment upon suspected black magic practitioners. It's also the inspiration for the extreme metal band's eleventh studio album, *Hammer of the Witches* (available July 10 from Nuclear Blast Records).

"The title of the book was about punishment of witches – witches being pounded by the strong arm of the law, with the *Malleus Maleficarum* essentially being a guidebook to supposed witchcraft," explains Filth. "Our album is about putting the hammer in the witches' hands. It's about retribution."

That Filth – the only remaining original member of the band since its founding in 1991 – should be inspired by a centuries-old guidebook responsible for the torture and death of countless innocent women makes sense, given his background. Raised in Suffolk, an English county notorious for its witch trials, Filth and his wife once even rented rooms in a cottage frequented by Matthew Hopkins, the notoriously cruel witch hunter portrayed by Vincent Price in 1968's *Witchfinder General*.

"The area is steeped in that mythology," Filth says. "There are monuments to the burning of Catholics, the burning of Protestants, of witches. They burned everybody, for Christ's sake! Part of the reason the band turned out the way it did, I suppose, was just being surrounded by those iconic kind of images."



Despite the album title and artwork featuring a coven of witches fawning over a demonic entity, Filth maintains that *Hammer* is not a pure concept album like *1998's Cruelty and the Beast*, about blood-drinking countess Elizabeth Bathory, or 2003's *Damnation and a Day*, about Lucifer's rise. The songs do share certain themes, however. For example, similar to revenge-seeking witches, many songs reference goddesses, in opposition to the male Christian God. "Deflowering the Maidenhead, Displeasuring the Goddess," for instance, is about mankind's violation of the Greek Earth deity Gaia.

"It's something that has always been at the heart of Cradle of Filth, to find the ideology of the female godhood figure as being an anti-archetypal figure," Filth explains. "Because most godhoods are male, and the female figure is seen as the first sin, the reason we've fallen. 'Displeasuring the Goddess' is about Gaia suffering this constant suffocation and poisoning, of her being raped."

Other themes on the album are derived from classical art. "Right Wing of the Garden Triptych" is a heavy musical missive to Hieronymus Bosch's The Garden Of Earthly Delights, the massive triptych painting depicting all manner of surreal horrors.

"I've always been a massive fan of Hieronymus Bosch," Filth says. "[On the left panel] you've got Eden, where we got the first man and woman and those things starting to appear. And you've got the central panel, which is like the Earth overpopulated, filled with colour and getting perverse. And then you've got Hell on Earth, which is the punishing side, which is the right wing."

Meanwhile, on "The Vampyre at My Side," Cradle of Filth spins a Poe-esque tale, again of a female character seeking revenge.

"We used the traditional spelling to give it that Medieval flavour, but also to distance it from those *Buffy*/*Twilight* movies that everyone talks about," he says.

Despite delving deep into the darker parts of literature, history and the arts for inspiration on *Hammer* and the albums before it, Filth's love for horror comes from a very unexpected place.

"It all came from John Landis, really," he admits. "I was watching Universal horror films and Hammer horror. All of that clicked when I saw the making of John Landis's "Thriller" video. And before that obviously came *An American Werewolf in London*, which ultimately led to my lifelong love of the genre."

No, there aren't any breakdancing zombies associated with *Hammer of the Witches* but it does feature all the demons and creatures of the night you'd expect from Cradle of Filth. So scream on.

BLOODY DEAD



NOW PLAYING > THE WITCHER III: WILD HUNT, DARK SOULS II, BLOODBORNE, WOLFENSTEIN: THE OLD BLOOD



THE WITCHER III: WILD HUNT

PS4, Xbox One, PC
CD Projekt RED/WB Games



The *Witcher* franchise is pretty much the *Grand Theft Auto* of RPGs. You get sex, nudity, coarse language, casual chauvinism, plus over-the-top gore and mountains of monsters – and despite some of it, and because of most of it, it's a really great gaming experience. *The Witcher III: Wild Hunt* certainly lives up to, if not exceeds, its predecessors.

You're back as Geralt, the notorious white-haired witchar (a.k.a. monster hunter), and this time you're on the tail of the Wild Hunt (an army of ghostly warriors) that has been leaving corpses across the continent. As you chase it, you'll embark on a variety of other quests, including monster-killing contracts, people-in-peril rescues and many, many missions that expand the main plotline.

The Witcher III: Wild Hunt is epic. Some sources claim its open world is twenty percent bigger than that of *Skyrim*. Not surprisingly, you don't traverse it all on foot; you have your trusty horse Roach (upon whom you can engage in mounted combat and horse races) and boats to pilot along lakes, rivers and inlets. Be careful, though, as you're just as likely to run into on-level enemies as baddies who greatly out-power you, so save often.

This next-gen title is gorgeous on the PS4, with trees and hair that rustle in the breeze, gory beheadings and bifurcations that send body parts soaring through the air, not to mention landscapes that look like nature paintings brought to life.

Most of the franchise's complexities, including the farming and crafting system, which allows you to make potions, oils, weapons, armour and other items to assist you in battle, has been maintained, and depending on which difficulty level you choose to play at, using these materials is absolutely essential, especially during boss fights.

If there's one complaint about this release, it's that occasionally the controls seem less responsive than they should be when trying to loot an item or unsheathe a sword during battle. Otherwise everything is so brilliant, bloody and immersive it'd be easy to lose oneself in Geralt's world for weeks.

Judging from this month's game reviews alone, it looks like there's going to be one hell of a battle for Game of the Year in 2015.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



HEADSHOTS: EXPANSIVE, STUNNING OPEN WORLD, GOOD QUEST VARIETY, CHALLENGING GAMEPLAY
MISFIRES: SOME OF THE NPC DIALOGUE IS REALLY REPETITIVE, OCCASIONAL GLITCHES



DARK SOULS II

PS4, PS3, Xbox 360, Xbox One, PC
Bandai Namco Games

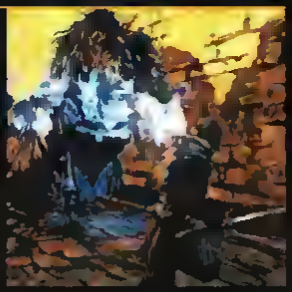
How do you improve upon one of the hardest, meanest, most soul-crushing games ever? You make it slightly harder.

Dark Souls II, much like its monster-laden predecessor, is an action RPG devoid of customizable difficulty settings and in-game maps. So as you explore the realms of Drangleic – the gloomy dungeons of The Lost Bastille and the spider-infested Brightstone Cove Tseldora, among them – it's easy to wander into areas inhabited by creatures far above your skill level.

There are eight playable character classes (Knight, Warrior, Sorcerer, Cleric, Bandit, Swordsman, Explorer and the Deprived, who begin the game with no armour, weapons or spells), though these can be reassigned later via a soul stone that redistributes character points. Don't like the mage you created? Turn him into a warrior! Overall combat is better balanced and more fluid than in the 2011 original. That said, rolling around with a large two-handed mallet is more awkward than fighting with, say, a sleek silver dagger. The weight of equipped items makes a definite difference to your character's agility and movement speed.

Two of the most notable changes in *Dark Souls II* are the addition of a consumable torch (required to light your way in the dark, reveal secret areas and occasionally keep monsters at bay) and the concept of "going more hollow." Each time you die, which happens painfully often, your character loses more of its humanity and starts to look increasingly undead (i.e. hollower). Furthermore, each time you're resurrected you come back with fewer hit points, making staying alive even harder. Fortunately you can restore your hit points by using "Humanity," though it's an item not easily found.

Minor tweaks like these make *Dark Souls II* even more rewarding than the original. Of course, a lot of gameplay elements have been carried over too, including the multiplayer boss battles and the ability of other players to invade your game unbidden and screw up your plans, particularly if you can't defeat them.



In short, *Dark Souls II* will swallow your soul all over again – and you'll welcome it.

BRENTON BENTZ



HEADSHOTS: IMPROVED COMBAT AND SMARTER AI. THE NEW TAKE ON HOLLOWING
MISFIRES: STORY IS CRYPTIC AND CHALLENGING TO FOLLOW



BLOOOBORNE

PlayStation 4

SCE Japan Studio

The city of Yharnam has seen better days. Once known for its successful though highly strange medical practices focusing on blood, it has now fallen to a blood-borne disease that has afflicted most of its inhabitants, transforming them into bizarre, fearsome and aggressive creatures. But there's a strange beauty to this decrepit city – and many mysteries to unfold.

Following a traumatic blood transfusion, the player awakens as "the hunter." With nary a possession to his name, exploration of this unusual new world begins. It's not long before the first monster is encountered and the hunter is killed. Awakening in another realm, known as the Hunter's Dream, players are offered a choice of melee weapon and gun before returning to the physical world, now better equipped to deal with enemies.

Bloodborne is a deep action RPG that rewards strategy above all else. However, unlike *Dark Souls* and *Demon Souls*, *Bloodborne*'s combat encourages a more aggressive approach to battles. Swift attacks earn health recovery bonuses, while cowardice is penalized. As a result, combat is a ton of fun. While *Bloodborne* can be punishingly difficult, deaths are, for the most part, a direct result of poor attack planning. The game's enemies are smart, and will attempt overcome you at the earliest indication of a screw-up. By defeating them, the hunter accrues Blood Echoes, which can be used to fortify and repair weapons, as well as purchase items.



Bosses, such as the horribly disfigured horned wolf hybrid Cleric Beast, offer the game's biggest thrills, though first encounters with them never go well. Still, the appeal of giving the battle another go never wears thin thanks to the way enemy intelligence adapts as the player levels up, keeping things challenging. And this is where *Bloodborne* truly shines.

SHAUN HATTON



READSHOTS: INTERESTING, BEAUTIFUL WORLD, GREAT COMBAT SYSTEM, LOTS TO EXPLORE
MISFIRES: AGGRESSIVE DIFFICULTY CURVE MAY ALIENATE SOME PLAYERS



WOLFENSTEIN: THE OLD BLOO

PS4, Xbox One, PC

Machine Games/Bethesda

B.J. glares coldly at the Aryan giant. Faced with certain annihilation, the square-jawed hero still manages to stare down the Nazi murder machine and spit, "When I'm done with you, I will kill your dog." And he does.

These brief moments are the lone highpoints in *Wolfenstein: The Old Blood*, wherein hero B.J. Blazkowicz still welcomes certain death like it's a newborn puppy.

The prequel to last year's *Wolfenstein: The New Order* greatly alters the formula that made its predecessor a Game of the Year contender and, as a result, loses everything that made that game good. *The Old Blood* takes Blazkowicz deep into the bowels of Castle Wolfenstein only to have him claw his way to freedom and fight through the zombie-infested streets of Wolfberg. That's right, there are zombies.

The game falters largely because there's no story to speak of for the first two-thirds of its lengthy campaign. Where *The New Order* utilized brilliant cut scenes to further plot and introduce a mesmerizing cast of characters, *The Old Blood* quickly devolves into uninspired repetition as you sneak through endless generic dungeons. Its overemphasis on stealth is equally baffling, as not only is the series based on gleeful violence, but here it provides players with an imposing arsenal of cold steel, then repeatedly punishes them for utilizing that firepower. *The Old Blood* already feels like a lost cause by the time it finally embraces what made Wolfenstein famous in its third act. Nazi scum and a hell of a lot of bullets.



The game mercifully ends in a boss battle that quickly devolves into spray-and-pray rather than strategy. Much like the sleeping dogs littered throughout this campaign, it's best to just let this one lie.

SCOTT DELL



READSHOTS: SCRAYING CLASSIC GERMAN ARCHITECTURE WITH EXPLOSIVE GORE
MISFIRES: ALMOST NO PLOT, COMPLETELY FAILS TO RAISE THE STAKES

CLASSIC CUT

THE BBC'S HORROR DOUBLE BILLS

BBC ☠ UK - 1975-1983-

If you were a British horror film aficionado during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the place to be on summer Saturday nights was in front of a television tuned to BBC2 to get your fix of the station's Horror Double Bills. Though the idea of dedicating whole evenings to horror had been a staple of American television since the 1950s, it was a new idea to more conservative British television audiences. For a whole generation of kids in their impressionable early teens, this was their first opportunity to experience the horrors of Universal and Hammer, which had terrified their parents and grandparents before them.



Modelled after movie theatre B-movie double bills, the presentations were imaginatively subtitled under names such as Masters of Terror and Monster Double Bill and featured a vintage chiller followed by a contemporary (relatively speaking) frightener. For example, on Saturday, August 4, 1979, the double bill consisted of the 1942 Universal film *Night Monster*, featuring Bela Lugosi and Lionel Atwill, followed by Hammer's *The Devil Rides Out* (1968). Other years saw films chosen by themes, such as the pairing of RKO's *The Hounds of Zaroff* (1932) with Fox's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939). Even amongst these, however, the 1977 season, named Dracula, Frankenstein and Friends stood out as it screened the films widely considered the Universal classics in chronological order, starting with 1931's *Dracula* and finishing ten weeks later with 1945's *House of Dracula*. For eight years, between 1975 and 1983 – for some unexplained reason they skipped a season in 1982 – the BBC screened over one hundred chillers from the vaults of horror. Little seen obscurities such as the 1951 Universal period piece *The Strange Door* shared the screen alongside more recognizable fare, including Amicus' *The Beast Must Die* (1974).


The Ghoul

The excitement of anticipation, as with most horror, was an important part of the Horror Double Bill ritual. The BBC's listings magazine, *The Radio Times*, was widely read, and the cover was considered, so it was a big deal when the horror double bills made it there for the week beginning Saturday, June 28, 1980. The image featured 1957's *Night of the Demon* and its sinister bedfellow *The Ghoul* (1975). It was the only time the horror seasons made the cover and a rare honour that went some way to lending the horror genre, often dismissed as a niche market, a degree of legitimacy amongst the wider public.

The final season of the double bills screened in 1983 after which – whether through dwindling enthusiasm from viewers or simply because of pressure from the station's all-powerful schedulers – the films faded from view. There were a few brief resurgences after the channel screened an All-Night Halloween Marathon in 1992, which in turn gave birth to a short-lived revival when the BBC again ran late-night horror double bills in 1993, 1994 and 1996 under the title Dr Terror Seasons. However, there's been nothing since then.

There have been attempts by a number of horror film fans to persuade the BBC to reintroduce the double bills in recent years. The Classic Horror Campaign – which has several thousand online supporters including scream queen Emily Booth – was set up to persuade the corporation to revive the film seasons. In recent years, the group hosted its own classic horror double bill screenings across the UK, including the Frighten Brighton Classic Horror Film Festival in 2012. To date, though, pleas to the network have fallen on deaf ears. With so many television channels now dedicated to the horror genre (both in the UK and worldwide), there's not as much call for a public television station to offer a film season aimed solely towards what many still consider a minority interest group. It may be difficult for audiences now, in our age of instant access, to appreciate the effect of the BBC's Horror Double Bills, but considering the ongoing interest it's hard to underestimate the influence those summer nights in front of the television had on a generation of horror film fans.

CLEAVER PATTERSON


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